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The Fragmented World of the Social

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The Fragmented World of the Social  
Essays in Social and Political Philosophy

Axel Honneth

Edited by Charles W. Wright

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## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The essays brought together in this volume were written during the past ten years for a variety of occasions and with different purposes in mind. Despite their diversity, the texts can be divided according to three thematic perspectives, each representing a principle focus of my work. The first part contains essays addressing a theme which, though from a more limited perspective, I systematically examined in my book *The Critique of Power*. The question there addressed concerns whether the various contributions to a critical theory of society can still prove themselves to be viable today. The projects contained in the second part are occupied principally with the French tradition of social philosophy, an interest which I developed in years past. These studies should be understood as attempts to compensate for the systematic weaknesses of the Frankfurt School through conceptual means appropriated from a competing theoretical tradition. The third part, finally, gathers works which move in the contested thematic field between moral theory and social philosophy. Though still in the form of provisional problem-formulations and theoretical stock-taking, the position already emerging here is one which I have sought systematically to outline in my new book, *The Struggle for Recognition*. As these few remarks show, the order in which these essays have been assembled represents the meandering path that I have followed in proceeding from the original aim of formulating a critique of critical social theory on to the development of an alternative theoretical program. I shall take the introduction of the collection presented here as an opportunity to again bring to mind, through a concisely presented retrospective, the central insights which I have reached in the course of this unintended learning process.

# Critique and Prescientific [*Vorwissenschaftliche*] Praxis

The starting point of the path traced by the essays assembled here is marked by the reflective return to a problem which has exercised a profound influence upon the history of critical theory in our century. When in the 1930s Horkheimer sought to define the unique character of the theory he represented by attributing to it the capacity for insight into the context of its own development and application, he had thereby not only formulated a methodological claim but also a social-theoretical project. This manner of self-reflection calls for a "sociological" analysis, in particular, that is in a position to explain social development in such a way that a practical dimension of critique emerges as a constitutive requirement for critical understanding. The specific relation into which Horkheimer, drawing upon Marx, brought together theory and practice presupposes a determination of the driving forces of society which locates in the historical process itself the impetus both to critique as well as to overcoming established forms of domination. Only then, when the emancipatory interest from which critical theory also took its lead was already present within the context of social life, could it with justice suppose itself to be a reflective moment of social development.

The social-theoretical tools which the members of the inner circle of the Frankfurt Institute had at their disposal, though, were from the beginning hardly up to the task of converting this ambitious objective into practical research. As I seek to show in "Critical Theory", the essay occupying the center of the first part of this volume, the commitment to a Marxist functionalism seduced Horkheimer and his co-workers into supposing that there existed such a closed cycle between capitalist domination and cultural manipulation, that there could remain within the social reality of their time no space for a zone of moral-practical critique. Within this tradition of theory, this particular problem had to be still further aggravated to the extent that the prescientifically nourished emancipatory hopes began to lose their original persuasiveness. As indications in the lifeworld for an already existing dimension of practical critique became weaker, the difficulties had to become all the greater for a sociological analysis which relied upon awareness of such indications as an objective presupposition of the theory. The transition of critical theory into Adorno's philosophical-historical negativism marks, finally, the historical moment at which the reflexive undertaking of a social-historical recovery of critique was brought to a complete stand-still. Since then anyone who might seek once again to take up Horkheimer's original objectives has first been confronted with the task of again establishing theoretical access to that now elusive realm in

which the standards of critique could be prescientifically anchored. Thus a key problem of critical theory today consists in the question of how we are to obtain the conceptual framework for an analysis which is capable both of coming to grips with the structure of social domination as well as with identifying the social resources for its practical transformation.

It is for the problem just sketched that the essays before you seek to find a solution, though without a specific direction or clear orientation. A preliminary judgment about the direction that might lead to an appropriate solution was reached, I must confess, rather early in the course of my own development. This early conviction is recorded here not only in the essay mentioned earlier, entitled "Critical Theory," but also particularly in the essay on Adorno and Habermas. There I suggest that only along the route opened by Jürgen Habermas through his communicative transformation of critical social theory could we catch sight of the conceptual means by which access to a prescientific realm of moral critique could once again be secured. With the conversion of the theory from the paradigm of production to that of communication there came into view a dimension of social action in whichin the form of the normative expectations of interactiona layer of moral experiences was laid out which could serve as the point of reference for an immanent, yet transcending moment of critique.

Such a program was in any case, as the essays mentioned also indicate, at the time hardly more than a provisional, though well-meant intention. The direction in which Habermas himself further pursued his original idea, employing universal pragmatics as the theoretical means for analyzing the normative presuppositions of social interaction, from the very beginning, for initially unclear, rather diffuse reasons, failed to convince me. It appeared to me that this approach resulted in a split between the level of moral-theoretic statements and that of our everyday moral experiences which could only prove detrimental for the empirical intentions of a critical theory of society.

Precisely because this reservation was at first only a very vaguely felt one, however, the following essays should be understood as documenting a wandering search for the possibility of an alternative formulation of Habermas's original idea. In the course of this quest my attention has been engaged by four thematic domains, in each of which I have brought to light ideas that have determined my further development: (1) the domain of everyday moral experience, which I have begun to open up with the aid of the concept of a struggle for recognition; (2) the relation obtaining between the organization of social labor and the experience of recognition; (3) the theme of a diagnosis of the crisis of modern society, to which I must seek an approach different than that of

Habermas and critical theory, and finally (4) a psychoanalytic concept of the subject, which must explicate the moral creativity of individual persons. Referring to the texts collected here, I shall briefly elaborate upon each of these four stages of understanding.

## The Struggle for Recognition

I have already mentioned the growing split between the level of moral philosophy and that of everyday social experience as one of the unfortunate consequences associated with Habermas's turn to universal pragmatics. Through concentrating upon the normative implications of linguistic action, there arises the danger that the philosophical justification of morality can no longer be converted into statements which refer concretely to the moral reactions and feelings of everyday interaction. This is because, in general, subjects experience injury to what we can describe as the "moral point of view" not in terms of a deviation from intuitively mastered rules of speech, but rather as violence to identity claims acquired through processes of socialization. As vague and undifferentiated as this reservation may seem today, so were the paths to further research that it was able to open rich in prospects. The effort to understand more precisely the manner in which morality is embedded in everyday social practice directs us first to historical and sociological studies that have been concerned with the moral conduct and reflection of members of social classes which traditionally have not specialized in the articulation of moral experiences. From the encounter with inquiries of this kind, the conclusion emerged that the motivation underlying acts of political resistance, or, for that matter, any kind of protest action, is not an orientation toward positively formulated moral principles, but rather is the experience of violence to intuitively presupposed conceptions of justice. On the basis of this consideration I engaged at that time in composing the essay "Moral Consciousness and Class Domination," which sought to demonstrate that the potential for moral action on the part of social underclasses cannot enter into the visual field of a discourse ethic because its principle categories are too much framed for the dimension of linguistically articulated moral principles. Admittedly, I underestimated at the same time the number of mediating stages that would be necessary in order to forge a connection between the level of the justification of moral norms and the empirical analysis of moral motivations. On the other hand, however, this essay also steered me in the direction along which my own work would from then on have to proceed, if I was to seek within social reality a norma-

tive reference point in which the moral standards of critique were to be prescientifically anchored. For my review of the empirical material had provided ample evidence that it is principally violence to individual or collective claims to social recognition within the lifeworld which will be experienced as moral injustice. Thus it was with the goal of providing social criticism with an empirical foothold that the project of exploring further the structure and dynamics of relations of mutual recognition was formulated.

This formulation of the problem naturally contained a recourse to the conceptual model that Hegel had developed during his Jena period, under the title of a 'struggle for recognition', in an effort to account for progress in the history of human society. Referring to the intersubjective conditions under which subjects first are able to achieve a fully developed consciousness of themselves, the idea was developed here for the first time that the claims of morality must be understood as guarantees of an undistorted identity formation. This early conceptual model of Hegel's possessed, above and beyond that, the no less important asset of making the existence and expansion of such moral guarantees dependent upon the struggles through which the subjects bring about the recognition of their gradually developing claims to identity. The zones of social conflict which thereby come into view show exactly the characteristics which had to be possessed by that prescientific reference point upon which critical theory in Horkheimer's sense had to rely. If we take both of these assets together, it is not difficult to comprehend why the Hegelian model of the 'struggle for recognition' had to take on increasing importance for my own objectives: not only is a conception of morality therein laid out which can be connected in a satisfactory manner to the intuitive moral sentiments of subjects, but it also contains an indication of the mechanism through which those feelings could become a motivational wellspring for social conflicts. In order, though, while undertaking a reconstruction of Hegel's philosophy, 2 to avoid falling into the danger of unwittingly incorporating his metaphysical premises, I have more or less at the same time undertaken the project of subjecting to independent critical examination the few post-Hegelian, and thus "materialistic," outlines of a struggle for recognition. Along the path that was thereby adopted lay the contributions of Marx, Sartre, and Bourdieu, to each of which one of the essays presented here has been dedicated.

Despite their diversity, these three approaches reveal as shall be shown directly both common advantages as well as disadvantages in comparison with Hegel's early conceptual model: though all fall back below the level of conceptual differentiation that the latter



had already achieved through his distinction between three forms of recognition, they all at the same time, nonetheless, also bring to the fore new aspects in the dynamics of the struggle for recognition which are indispensable for further analysis. Whereas in his Jena writings Hegel had, under the headings of love, law [*Recht*], and ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*], distinguished between three patterns of mutual recognition one finds that Marx, Sartre, and Bourdieu have each thematized but one of these forms of recognition. Here the multiplicity of human claims which depend upon confirmation through recognition is categorically reduced to the single dimension of self realizationthe dimension for which Hegel saw *Sittlichkeit* acting as the medium of fulfillment. This tendency toward theoretical reductionism is offset in all three approaches, however, by a series of insights which fruitfully illuminate the connection between the disappointment of expectations for recognition and everyday social action.

Though it is quite unlikely that he was familiar with its outlines from the Jena period, Marx integrates this Hegelian theme into his doctrine of class struggle. Despite all its one-sidedness, this approach contains the insightnot to be dismissed too lightlythat in the context of everyday social life it is above all with work that the subjects associate the expectation of social recognition. Sartre, in his early sketches of a phenomenological ontology, so generalized the 'struggle for recognition' into a permanent existential situation for humans that its moral satisfaction in successful experiences of mutual recognition had to fall completely from sight. The later introduction of an historical sensibility into his original approach, however, created for him the possibility of analyzing the social consequences of routinized disregard for entire communities in a manner which even today has hardly decreased in significance. Among these three authors, finally, Bourdieu represents an exception, because his own inquiries into the symbolic struggle for cultural hegemony never took on a theoretical form which would have allowed them to be treated as contributions to the explanation of moral conflicts. If we strip his empirical analyses of their utilitarian or economic interpretive components, however, then they enable us to see the great extent to which everyday social life in modern societies is permeated by conflicts over cultural recognition.

On the path traced by the encounter with these approaches, the idea gradually became clear that normative presuppositions are built into everyday social practices which are connected with subjects' claims that their capacities or characteristics should receive social recognition. Since under the actual conditions of social integration such expectations are largely disappointed, morality finds its legitimate place in a society-



immanent struggle for recognition which again and again receives new impetus through individual or collective feelings of having been denied respect. Thus the first contours of a conception of moral struggle began to take shape with which Habermas's original insight was to be further developed in an alternative direction: where in his case the theory of interaction connected together with a universal pragmatic analysis of the presuppositions of communication, the inquiry ought in my case to consist of the normative presuppositions of human identity formation which are, in turn, linked to the experience of recognition. From this point on I hoped to reach a conception of morality which remained in close contact with the everyday reality of social conflict. Before even the first steps in this program of conceptual reorientation appeared feasible to me, though, there still were certain unclear features in the relation to the legacy of critical theory that first needed systematically to be dispensed with. One of the difficulties thus indicated emerges from the question of how the experience of work might appropriately be located in the envisaged conception of moral struggle.

## Work and Recognition

The attempt to reconstruct the legacy of Marxist theory from the perspective of the theme of recognition brought immediately and unmistakably to my attention that the experience of work [*Arbeit*] would have to receive a central position in the conception that was taking shape. On the other hand, however, I had already accepted the approach of Habermas's theory to the extent that I wanted to free the category of social labor from all of those philosophical-historical implications which had helped to establish its unique normative position in the Marxist tradition. From the opposition between these two objectives there rose for me the question, to what extent might the concept of work be normatively neutralized without, however, at the same time losing its significance as a principle source of moral experience. On the one hand, the process of social labor as such may no longer, as it still is in the tradition of Western Marxism, be built up into a process of the formation of emancipatory consciousness. On the other hand, however, it must certainly also remain embedded in moral experience to a degree sufficient to ensure that its role in the relations of social recognition is not lost from view.

I first sought to address the problem just sketched above in an essay, contained in this volume, entitled "Work and Instrumental Action." As the contrast of the two concepts in the title already indicates,

the essay is concerned above all with Habermas's substitution of the category of 'instrumental action' for that of 'work.' What interested me in this conceptual transformation was the question whether it falls short of that critical threshold, beyond which alone the normative dimension of the organization of work could at all adequately be thematized. The answer to the affirmative, which I reached at the time of its writing, seems to me to this day hardly to have lost its validity, even though I have since come to regard the central argument of the essay as being in need of revision. I there suggest that in the category of 'instrumental action' those 'moral' components of the work process are lost which arise from the normative expectations that actors possess concerning the quality of their work activities, because they normally seek to link them to the opportunity to fulfill their identities. Against this thesis, now, one can with good reasons object that here the criteria of moral assessment cannot be related to the internal character of the work process itself, but rather only to the institutional framework in which it is necessarily embedded. Since the norms which regulate the organization of work must be understood according to the general framework of rules of interaction, the standards which lie at the basis of their assessment must be the same as those applying to the justification of norms in general. 3

Now such an objection is for its part, though, only suited for that dimension of possible validity which may be claimed by those norms which can be proposed with regard to the organization of social labor. The question, however, whether or not the concept of 'instrumental action' is too narrow to take into consideration the genesis of those moral judgments which address themselves critically to the structure or content of work processes, remains unaddressed. When individual identity formation also depends upon the social esteem which one's own work enjoys within one's society, then the concept of work simply cannot be so constructed that it categorically overlooks this psychic connection. The theoretical consequences would otherwise be awkward: namely, that all those efforts in social theory which strive to reevaluate or reform specific work processes would remain not just incomprehensible, but, moreover, virtually invisible. In this respect the objections which, in the essay in question, I brought to bear against the concept of 'instrumental action' should not be taken as reservations with regard to its normative content, but rather as a critique of its descriptive and explanatory potential. Specific zones of prescientific critique come into view only to the degree that they are analyzed in light of a concept of work which categorically includes an individual's reliance upon the social recognition of his or her own activity.

Today it is above all the debate carried out within feminist theory concerning the problem of unpaid housework 4 that is relevant for the further analysis of the relationship in which work and recognition stand together. In the wake of this discussion it has become clear from two perspectives in particular that the organization of social labor is closely connected with ethical norms which themselves, in turn, regulate the system of social status. From an historical perspective, the fact that childrearing and housework have hitherto not been esteemed as kinds of social labor equally necessary for social reproduction is only to be explained with reference to the low social status assigned to such work within the framework of a culture determined by patriarchal values. From the perspective of psychology there emerges, from the same set of circumstances, the situation that within the traditional division of gender roles, women could count on but few opportunities for finding within the society the degree of social esteem that constitutes a necessary condition for a positive self-understanding. From both lines of thought the conclusion may be drawn that the recognition accorded to an individual's work is contingent upon the cultural definitions that within a society establish at any one time the degree of social status which is assigned to specific occupations and how they ought correspondingly to be socially organized. In the essay "Plurality and Recognition" I have undertaken a first attempt, in the form of a critique of 'Postmodernity', to make the relation just discussed between work and recognition fruitful for a diagnosis of the present era. This essay suffers, though, from theoretical confusion resulting from the circumstance that to this day it still is not entirely clear to me what place in general the sphere of work is to occupy within the framework of a diagnosis of crises in contemporary society.

## Pathologies of Modern Society

In the tradition of the Frankfurt School the tendency has developed to take as the decisive 'disorder' [*Störung*] of modern societies the fact that instrumental reason has achieved hegemony over other forms of action and knowledge. All manifestations and phenomena that could appear to be 'pathological' in social reality are here interpreted as effects resulting from the autonomy achieved by those orientations in thought and action connected with the goal of dominating nature. This same tendency still continues in Habermas's work as well, inasmuch as his formulation of his 'Theory of Communicative Action' proceeds to a

diagnosis of the present era which is based on the idea of the threat represented by the 'colonization of the lifeworld' through rational-purposively organized system imperatives. Thus, again, what counts as the disorder from which the life-system of our society is supposed to be threatened is the circumstance of a growing hegemony of instrumental orientationseven if they no longer emerge simply as a result of the goal of dominating nature, but rather are explained in terms of the ascent of organizational rationality. 5

Typical of the critical diagnoses of the present era carried out by this tradition, then, is the supposition that all pathologies or anomalies of social life can inevitably be measured only against the stage in the development of human rationality that has been reached at that particular time. As a result it is only one-sided developments in the cognitive orientations of human beings that can count as deviations from an ideal, which must, in turn, be categorically presupposed as the standard of a 'healthy' or intact social formation. Such a perspective, which represents an inheritance of left-Hegelianism, is accompanied by the corresponding disadvantage that all those social pathologies which have nothing to do with the developmental level of rationality can no longer be brought into view at all. The tradition of the Frankfurt School must lack the critical-diagnostic sensory apparatus necessary to detect those disorders in social life which Durkheim, for instance, had in mind when he studied the process of individualization, because such phenomena do not result directly in changes in human reason.

On the basis of the initial premisses which I established during the course of my encounter with Habermas, it made no sense to settle for such a one-sided perspective on the pathologies of modernity. How are disorders of social life that are related to the structural conditions necessary for mutual recognition supposed to become apparent if the only criteria at our disposal are those pertaining to the assessment of deviations in the condition of human rationality? Thus an important step in the further development of these reflections consisted in the attempt to establish connections with theoretical traditions which afforded a broader approach, for example, one free of cognitivist constraints, to the diagnosis of social pathologies.

For this purpose, the recourse to the tradition of romantic anti-capitalism, which I undertook in the essay on Lukács' early writings, constitutes a kind of initial change of course. Still free from the restrictive framework of a fully developed theory, Lukács had in his pre-Marxist works sketched out a critical diagnosis of his era that was radical and penetrating in a manner similar to that of the young Hegel. In the early writings of both thinkers, the romantic ideals of their youth

continued, as normative standards, to exercise such an unbroken influence that they were in a position to develop descriptions and analyses of social pathologies which, with the completion of their systems, they were then compelled to overlook entirely. To this extent we could then learn from this tradition of philosophical diagnoses of crises where the possible locations of a disturbance in social life are to be found, if their diagnoses are not from the very beginning forced into the narrow scheme of a theory of rationality.

In their respective early writings both Lukács and Hegel distinguished among three regions of possible failure in social development. With regard to an individual's relation to self, there exists under certain circumstances the threat of a disintegration of identity, because a person's particular motivational complexes have not been sufficiently integrated. With regard to the relations of social life, disintegration can result when individualization has developed to such a degree that the conditions necessary for the formation of collective identities in general are undermined. And with regard to the relation to nature, finally, the danger of a social pathology emerges when nature is dominated to such an extent that the very possibility of a nonviolent integration of nature into the practice of social life is inhibited. 6

Of these three dimensions of possible pathology whose diagnosis today is naturally no longer so naïvely and unguardedly to be carried out that one relating to the conditions of social integration was for me above all of interest. It is only the essay on Claude Lévi-Strauss, included in this volume, that seeks indirectly to contribute to an understanding of the question of how social pathologies can be determined in connection with our relation to the natural world. In order to join the envisioned conception of recognition with a diagnosis of crises in modern societies, it was first of all necessary to inquire into the communicative presuppositions upon which an intact form of community organization is established. For this approach to the problem, though, there were hardly any further suggestions to be gotten from Lukács' early work: he had certainly not intended these writings to be taken as contributions to a clarification of those normative criteria which must be presupposed if the discussion is supposed to concern disturbances of social integration. Whether his later ontology can be interpreted as an attempt to derive such criteria by means of an analysis of the necessary presuppositions of human socialization is, to be sure, still an open question. The case is otherwise with the early Hegel, whose theory of recognition can without difficulty be understood as an explication of the particular communicative conditions that should be able to guarantee a successful form of community organization. The three patterns of

recognition represented by 'love,' 'law,' and the 'community of value' [*Wertgemeinschaft*] can be understood, then, as the patterns of communication which, taken together, must be present in a society if it is to be thought to be intact, in the sense that it alone is capable of securing for its members the opportunity for successful identity formation. 7

If the recourse to Hegel's early writings thus gives a first indication of how the normative criteria could be obtained with which pathologies of social integration might be ascertained, this recourse admittedly falls short completely on questions of a diagnosis of the present era. If and to what degree subjects today "suffer" from a lack of or an asymmetry in opportunities for social recognition was to be clarified only to the extent to which our gaze shifts to the communicative infrastructure of contemporary societies. Aside from sociological contributions to this theme, which I have discussed in another place<sup>8</sup>, the debate between liberalism and communitarianism above all promised further elucidation here, since one decisive theme of this exchange was not least the question whether the liberal societies of the West can generate from out of their own self-understanding the communicative conditions which constitute a necessary presupposition both for individual identity formation as well as for democratic will formation.<sup>9</sup> The essay included here, however, in which I have sought to reconstruct the course of this debate from systematic points of view, quickly makes clear that the communitarian approach is only of very limited interest for my own line of inquiry. To be sure, motives related to a diagnosis of our present era play a strong, even definitive role in their approach, but the relationship between empirical assessments of the situation and normative argumentation is altogether too unclear to make it possible to obtain direct insights concerning the situation in which communicative relations and, with that, social integration find themselves today. With the exception of the more recent works of Charles Taylor, which, in the form of a conceptual clarification of the idea of "authenticity", point in the direction of a substantive philosophical diagnosis of the present era,<sup>10</sup> communitarianism has thus contributed so far but little to the resolution of the question concerning the extent to which we can at this time speak of a pathology of social integration.

On the other hand, the exchange with those social-theoretic approaches which, in the face of an increase in social disintegration, speak of a transition to an epoch of the 'Postmodern,' has brought me a small step further forward. In this essay, "Plurality and Recognition," mentioned above, I was able to make clear to myself that the empirical phenomena, which are understood by proponents of postmodernism as the expression of an increase in aesthetic freedom, must be interpreted

largely as the negative consequence of a breakdown in traditional relations of recognition, in particular of those established in industrial society. In this respect, many of the works which today are undertaken in the interest of a diagnosis of the present era point indirectly to a condition in our society which I would describe as a crisis in the structure of social relations of recognition. Admittedly, in order to be able to lend this thesis a greater degree of theoretical precision and empirical plausibility it will first require yet more thorough inquiry concerning the extent to which we are currently facing a process whereby traditional patterns of recognition have, up to the present, undergone an unremediated erosion. My suspicion is that it has to do today with a sociocultural transformation in which both the intimate sphere of the family as well as the organizational field of social labor are losing their significance for the creation of recognition, without there already having been established in their place new and stable patterns of emotional connection or social status.

### Prescientific Practice and Subjectivity

All of the reflections which I have to this point presented converge together in the thesis that it is on the basis of the diverse manifestations of a struggle for recognition that a critical social theory will be able to justify its normative claims. The moral experiences to which humans are subjected as a result of disregard for their claims to identity form, so to speak, the prescientific instance with reference to which it can be shown that the theoretical critique is not completely without a foothold in social reality. If all the implications inhering in this thesis are taken into consideration, it very quickly becomes clear which problem domain along the path of development outlined so far still remains unexamined: the idea of making the struggle for recognition into the prescientific point of reference for critical social theory requires, namely, not only reflections in social theory and a diagnosis of the present era, but also a concept of the person that is capable of explaining how the claim upon the recognition of one's own identity is anchored within the particular subject. If it is to fulfill its assigned task, there are two premises in particular which such a concept of the person must be able to establish. On the one hand, it must be shown by means of a theory of socialization that it is only on the condition of the construction of a sound self-relation or ego-identity that subjects are in the position to be able to experience the different forms of recognition. As I have sought to demonstrate in another place, George Herbert Mead's theory



can here be of further assistance, 11 because it has convincingly mapped out the genetic relation between personal individuation and intersubjective recognition. But with a theoretical conception of this kind, no account is offered for the motivational driving force that is supposed at all times and places to make the individual claim to recognition into a "need" for subjects in general. The functional explanation provided by Mead offers no insight as to why the struggle for recognition, principally on the individual level, but thereby also on the societal level, cannot be silenced. For that reason there needs to be, secondly, a theoretical concept that is capable of showing plausibly the extent to which the individual claim to recognition is anchored in every subject as an enduring motive which is continually capable of being activated. Only if it is convincingly demonstrated that in their claims to identity people constantly transcend the framework of action given at any particular time will we be able to proceed from the assumption of a motivational impetus which underpins an enduring readiness for conflict. The need for such an account is the more urgent because, from the very beginning in the tradition of critical social theory, the idea held sway that at the late capitalist stage of social development, subjects have lost all motivational impulses toward resistance or change.

In seeking out a particular tradition of psychoanalytic theory to provide the explanatory framework just outlined, my first inspiration came to me through my engagement with the work of Cornelius Castoriadis. Among the social theorists who currently pursue the goal of developing a systematic critique of the social relations of modern capitalism, Castoriadis is apparently the only one who in his pursuit relies upon a psychoanalytic concept of human identity. As did Marcuse twenty years earlier, so today he seeks to uncover within the subject itself the transformative potential that constantly and repeatedly pushes beyond the established framework of a given social order. Unlike Marcuse, however, Castoriadis does not seek such a transformative potential in an invariant instinctual nature [*Bedürfnisnatur*] of humans. He wants instead, following Lacan, to show that the original act of socialization leaves behind, in every subject, an uncontrollable steam of wishful fantasies which are rooted in the prereflexive recollection of a state of complete omnipotence. Castoriadis believes that it is this unwavering power of the creative imagination that keeps alive in the individual a readiness for experimental transformation. Insofar as this unconscious production of fantasies is not to be halted, every subject will thereby be equipped with the capacity to step beyond the order of social relations established at any given time.



As things now stand, however, Castoriadis is strongly inclined, as I attempt to show in an essay printed in this collection, to seek to draw conclusions from his psychoanalytic approach regarding an ontology of nature in its entirety which simply are not to be justified on that basis. On the other hand, his model also contains precisely the ideas necessary for supplying the conception of recognition thus far developed with a corresponding theory of personality. The hypothesis of an enduring unconscious, which again and again confronts us with fantasies of an unattainable reconciliation, makes explicable why, from the side of the subject, the struggle for recognition is not to be suppressed. Since humans are furnished with a multiplicity of possible needs, every person will again have to initiate that everyday conflict on all those occasions when it is a matter of securing social recognition for new and unprecedented claims to identity.

Before it will actually be able to provide the psychoanalytic basis for a critical theory of society, though, such a conception admittedly still stands in need of the further differentiations and supplements which are found in the tradition of psychoanalysis known by the name of Object Relations. This is because this school of thought, as I have sought to indicate in the last of the essays included here, has most thoroughly of all thought through and analyzed the relation between unconscious fantasies and social recognition. With this step, however, we shift our gaze to a domain of research work which lies beyond the essays which have been published in this volume.

Translated by Charles W. Wright

PART I  
THE TRADITION OF CRITICAL THEORY

## Chapter 1

### Domination and Moral Struggle:

#### The Philosophical Heritage of Marxism Reviewed

Throughout her life Hannah Arendt viewed Marxism as a nineteenth century theory. She found in Marx's work a revolutionary answer to that "social question" which twentieth century improvements in living conditions had anticlimactically brought to a close. 1 While twenty years ago this view may have run counter to intellectual currents, today Hannah Arendt would have found herself part of a general trend. Everywhere Marx's theory is again placed firmly in the past as an intellectual edifice of the nineteenth century. The period of a systematic revision of Marxism has, so it seems, given way to a trend of historicizing devaluation. For the systems-theorist, Marx's work presents a theory that has fully misunderstood the accomplishments of societies, indeed the very fact of their functional differentiation;2 for some historians, the doctrine of Marx and Engels is a romantic critique of the industrial revolution, which inevitably had, as a doctrine of annihilation, to lead directly to communist totalitarianism;3 and for the theoretician of social movements, Marx was the leading advocate of a worker's movement whose productivist goals belong to a past epoch of social conflicts.4 Finally, and in addition to this broad front, the last few years have witnessed the genesis of a genre of self-critical history of Marxism.

Here Marx is no longer viewed from an academic distance, and yet the history of his ideas is unsparingly described as a course doomed to failure. 5 All in all, the suggestive potential of Marxist theory has clearly exhausted itself. Given that its scientific content has been refuted, its political claims historically relativized and its philosophical foundations subjected to critique, Marxism has become an object for the recollections of historians of theory. I wish to address the question of whether anything and if so, what nonetheless remains of Marx and Marxism. I propose to do this by first offering three versions of a redemptive critique of Marxism (I); to be sure, the three attempts make more modest scientific claims, as I will show in a second step, than those Marx had associated with his theory (II); only in the reconstruction of this core will we see what topical content Marx's theory still retains (III).

## I

Today, Marxism seems to survive in its traditional form only in the context of analytic philosophy. The few writings which in the last years again promulgated an unchanged scientific program of Marxism originate almost without exception in attempts to provide an analytic interpretation of Marx's work; the central doctrines which, like the idea of base and superstructure, belong to the dogmatic stock-in-trade of historical materialism, have been subjected to methodological analyses and developed further at a highly advanced scientific level.<sup>6</sup> But the methodological efforts of analytic Marxism are in no way matched by the factual gains they yield; for it is precisely the central tenets which they take for granted that are today the object of the general critique of Marxism. Marxism's empirical prognoses have so little stood the test of time that the theory as a whole has in the meantime become problematic. Accordingly, outside of analytic Marxism probably no other theory can be found which still attempts to take up uncritically the historical materialist project. The tradition of Marxist self-critique, extending from Karl Korsch through Merleau-Ponty to Habermas, seems to have reached a new stage: no longer single aspects of Marx's philosophy, but now his social-theoretic program as a whole is questioned.<sup>7</sup>

In the past decade a single locus of problems has emerged as the common reference point for this new state of criticism: the economic functionalism governing the underlying principles of historical materialism. This has become the focus of criticism even in those attempts which endeavor to redeem the remnants of Marx's intentions for a contemporary theory. They jointly proceed from the idea that Marxist-

oriented social theory has so far been unable to break through the limits imposed on it by the economic reductionism of the base-superstructure model; they criticize that principle for considering non-economic spheres only to the extent of their applicability as expressions of or functional elements in the domain of economic activity itself. The efforts toward a redemptive critique, however, insist that these other spheres of action or functional domains must be considered with respect to their own internal logic, if the process of social reproduction is to be adequately analyzed. Today, social theory based on Marx can regain its critical potential only if the functionalist prioritizing of the economic sphere is dropped and the weight of the other domains of action is brought to bear: an analysis in which the achievements of all remaining spheres had been investigated as contributing to the one systemic aim of material production must give way to a research program that investigates the historically specific interrelationships of independent spheres of action. 8

While the different approaches to a redemptive critique of Marxism all turn their back in unison on economic functionalism, the positions they adopt, beyond this negative accord, are each different from the other differences that arise from the differing logics of action which each has systematically upgraded relative to the sphere of economic production. Depending on the problem one takes as central to Marxism, other spheres of action will invariably come into view which must then be extricated from the functionalist clutches of economic analyses. As far as I can see, three versions of such a redemptive critique of Marxism can be distinguished today. The first sees Marxism as decisively lacking in a theory of collective action; this shortcoming is supposedly compensated by placing the strategic actions of individual agents outside Marxist theory's functionalist frame of reference, and then analyzing these with regard to an internal logic. Since this analysis turns to the methods of game theory, I will call this version "game theoretic Marxism" (a). The second version also faults Marxist theory for its central lack of an adequate concept of collective action; however, here this deficiency is purportedly filled by revaluing the logic specific to cultural traditions and interpretive models. I will call this second version of a redemptive critique "culture-theoretic Marxism" (b). Finally, the third version holds the real problem of Marxism to lie in its lack of a sufficiently differentiated understanding of social power; this deficiency is supposedly made up by removing the mechanisms of social power formation from their functional linking to processes of economic reproduction and pursuing instead their independent logic. Hence this third version may be meaningfully called "power-theoretic Marxism" (c).

Let me now characterize these three versions of a redemptive critique of Marxism somewhat more precisely:

- (a) The historical experience behind the game-theoretic revision of Marxism is a disappointment with the explanatory potential of Marxist class theory. As a means for explaining the collective action of social groups, Marx's concept of classes had failed from the start. The features he used to differentiate individual classes structurally were heuristically so weak at the level of class-specific life-situations that no conclusions could be drawn as to the factual behavior of social classes.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, a tendency towards philosophical-historical objectivism has always predominated in the tradition that took its cue from Marx:<sup>10</sup> the action of collective agents was analyzed purely as the carrying out of objectively given tasks instead of a creative achievement. Game-theoretic Marxism reacts to this objectivist tendency of the Marxist theory of action in the form of a counter-movement. Here the resort to methodological individualism is at first linked with the aim of overcoming action-theoretic objectivism by focusing the analysis on the creative achievements of individuals' actions.<sup>11</sup> Yet the game-theoretic frame of reference allows one to consider the creative actions of subjects only to the extent that such actions are required for the purposive-rational pursuit of their own interests; game-theoretic Marxism thus proceeds from the individual agents reacting to historical conditions with the strategic goal of optimizing their opportunities. The game of agents reciprocally calculating their interests is then used to explain the construction of those collective plans for action by means of which social movements in turn act to modify historical conditions. Thus far game-theoretic analyses of this sort have been applied with some success primarily in the historical analysis of social conflicts.<sup>12</sup> In the meantime, however, this approach has begun to encounter critical reactions, since the categorical restriction of the analysis to the calculated plans for action of individuals necessarily omits the communicative context of social action.<sup>13</sup>
- (b) The same historical experience that informs the game-theoretic version of Marxism also provides the basis for the second approach: cultural-theoretic Marxism, which finds its home above all in England,<sup>14</sup> also constitutes a theoretical reaction to the failure of Marxist class theory. Admittedly, in its very definition of the causes of this failure it takes up a counter-position to the game-theoretic trend, since it attributes the objectivist tendencies of Marxist class theory to an excess, not a dearth of utilitarianism.<sup>15</sup> In terms of its premises, the cultural-theoretic approach agrees with those current interpretations which follow Parson's critique of Marxian theory.<sup>16</sup> He too proceeded from the idea that the

utilitarian tradition was problematically continued in Marx's work and that, in the wake of this tradition, Marx could only determine the actions of social classes in terms of a model of the rational pursuit of interests. Thus it is concluded that from the outset his theory neglected all the normative convictions and moral sentiments which social groups rely on for practical guidance. If the failure of Marxist theory is explained in this manner, then the theoretical revision must lead into a direction opposite to the game-theoretic approach: not the purposive-rational deliberations of individuals, but collective norms of action must be shifted into the center of the analysis. Culture-theoretic Marxism thus takes group-specific norms and values as its point of departure in order to explain the action of social classes; it takes the practices and customs embodied in class-specific everyday cultures to be the location of these collective norms for action. 17 Thus far culture-theoretical analyses of this sort have been especially successful in treating of the history of the labour movement.18 At the same time, however, this approach has also run onto criticism, since it has hardly succeeded in systematically embedding the everyday cultures analyzed in an overarching context processes of institutional integration.19

- (c) Finally the power-theoretic approach, which represents the third contemporary version of a redemptive critique of Marxism, embodies the historical experience of what have become autonomous state-bureaucracies and administrative apparatuses. On the one hand, the state-authoritarian development of East European socialism has dramatically revealed the possibility of bureaucratically supported state control; on the other hand, the continued political stability of Western capitalist societies has inevitably given the impression of perfectly functioning techniques of control. Experiences of this sort, however, could no longer be reconciled with the Marxist theory of power, in which all political power was conceived as economically grounded class domination articulated in the form of the state. The doubts which had already earlier been raised in respect to the Marxist conception now grew still further across a broad front.20 A first reaction to these difficulties can be seen in the debate launched by Althusser on the Marxist theory of state;21 but the question of how much autonomy falls to political authority was at first answered only from within Marxism's traditional horizon. Only after Foucault's theory of power had influenced debates on political theory22 did the discussion start to develop in a direction that led to a power-theoretic Marxism. Under Foucault's influence, social power was removed from the functional context of economic reproduction and in this respect held to be an independent element of historical development. Every social order relies upon tech-

niques of power conservation that are able to develop according to laws possessing their own independent logic. These logics of power conservation, each distinguished by the type of means it employs and the depth of its impact, then form the real nucleus of this sort of theory. 23 To be sure, thus far this power-theoretic approach seems not yet to have developed as far at the level of substantive empirical investigations. Moreover, it has already run into theoretical criticism, since the social processes of power conservation are disengaged from the structure of social interests to such an extent that they are in danger of becoming established as an independent substance of historical development.<sup>24</sup>

All three approaches thus juxtapose a new paradigm to the traditional Marxist economic functionalism: in order to explain the development of societies, the first resorts primarily to a logic of competition among individuals who calculate their own interests, the second to a logic of the intersubjective handing-down of collective norms and traditions and the third to a logic of the implementation and refinement of social power. In addition, differences in methodological stance and in diagnosis of the present era correspond to those in the basic paradigm adopted. While the game- and culture-theoretic approaches proceed methodologically from the practical orientations of subjects, the power-theoretic approach refers to the subject-independent processes of systematic mechanisms; the first two approaches claim to give an internal view, the third an external view of societies. This difference in methodological stance in turn determines the type of diagnostic questions which the different approaches can raise in respect to the social process. While the two action-theoretic alternatives inquire as to the potential for conflict within contemporary societies, in the third, attention is focused upon the rapid growth of power which distinguishes capitalism today. Seen in this way, it would seem that Marxism's revolution-theoretic legacy has been handed down to the game- and culture-theoretic approaches, and its systems-theoretic legacy to the power-theoretic approach. If this is so, however, then precisely what in Marxism had originally formed a theoretical unity would now be split in two, with the severed elements of Marxist social theory being abstractly opposed to one another in the various approaches attempting to save Marxism. A brief review of the claims which Marx systematically associated with his theory will confirm this finding.

## II

As we know today, Marx's work systematically connected the claims of a theory of emancipation to the goal of an analysis of society;



his aim was to analyze, along with the process of the social integration of capitalism, the conditions for its revolutionary overthrow. Marx was aided in his project of merging a theory of emancipation and social analysis by a speculative philosophy of history, the foundation of which was the concept of "social labour." By means of this concept he was able to conceptualize the formation of social orders and the development of social freedom as one single process. 25

"Labour" for Marx is always something more than the mere productive utilization of energy. To be sure, he first critically engages the reduction of the concept of work to economic categories, by means of which classical political economy had worked out the historical experience of the industrial revolution. For Marx, as well, labour is principally a value-creating activity and to that extent the constitutive condition of societies as such. But he understood human labour not only as a productive achievement, but as a formative event as well; he always injected an emancipation-theoretic aspect into the economic meaning of labour. In doing so, he was guided, via Hegel, by the central motifs of that expressive anthropology which can be considered the main achievement of the Romantic wing of the German Enlightenment, dating back to Herder. In this tradition, as Charles Taylor,<sup>26</sup> following Isaiah Berlin's example, has shown, all human action is interpreted as the means of expressing one's own essence; human action is then a process of the active realization of a self of self-realization. Hegel adopted this expressive motif and interpreted labour as a process of externalizing human abilities.<sup>27</sup> Marx, for his part, could follow suit, namely by adding onto labour as an economically defined activity the dimension of human self-realization. This enabled him to conceive of forms of instrumental action, which he, along with classical political economy, held to be the crucial factor of production, as a singular expressive event as well. Human labour is then understood as a process comprising both a person's productive output as human being and the externalization of his or her essential powers: labour is factor of production and expressive event in one. Therefore, in Marx's concept of labour are combined what H. Arendt later separated in the two action-types of work and labour.

Only with this ingenious conceptual synthesis was Marx, at least to a certain extent, then able to raise the Romanticism in his own work to the level of social theory. For the expressive model of labour forms the conceptual frame of his critique of capitalism as a whole. In his early writings as well as in the mature work, Marx interprets the historical epoch of capitalism as a socio-economic formation which structurally hinders or even precludes the self-identification of labouring subjects in their own products, and so too the possibility of self-realization.<sup>28</sup> Class

struggle as the relation of conflict between capital and labour is then the medium through which the forces of self-realization make a renewed attempt to resist the established powers of dead labour. Thus, for Marx the theory of capitalism is always something more than mere social analysis: it is also the historical diagnosis of an alienating relation and the experimental prognosis of a revolutionary overthrow.

I have only recalled these categorial relationships in order once again to stress the overarching claim of the Marxist analysis of capitalism: its romantically tinged concept of labour ensures that the historical process it analyzes entails a dimension of rationality, allowing Marx to perceive an established social order also as a moral relationship of struggle. Now it is just the philosophical-historical overtaxing of the concept of labour which for many years has been the focus of Marxist self-criticism. The social changes since Marx's time have first and foremost led to a full awareness of the problematic assertions that tacitly entered into the ingenious conceptual construction of his theory. Two empirical assumptions in particular have gradually come to be cast in doubt.

(a) Firstly, Marx presumes that social labour always represents the decisive condition constituting societies; only by means of this assumption was he able to derive the social order solely from the current organizational form of production and accordingly link the process of species development to progress in the forces of production. Not only have the central achievements of the social sciences after Marx rendered this initial empirical claim problematic; 29 social-structural changes in capitalism have themselves revealed to what extent non-instrumental forms of activity are constitutive in the reproduction of societies.<sup>30</sup> A tradition of self-critical Marxism thus running from Merleau-Ponty through Castoriadis to Habermas attempts to show that Marx inescapably verged on technological determinism, since he had reduced the developmental history of the species to the single dimension of social production.<sup>31</sup>

(b) Secondly, Marx had to presume that social labour represented the primary source of the formation of emancipatory consciousness; only thus could he establish a systematic connection between the critique of political economy and a practically oriented theory of revolution. True, Marx himself was only able to uphold this second empirical claim by means of further philosophical-historical assumptions; for that reason the inner link between labour and emancipation had always been controversial in the Marxist tradition.<sup>32</sup> But, above all, the degradation of labour activity due to the implementation of Taylor's principles of productive efficiency in the years after Marx's death finally made clear that the capitalist forms of labour contain in themselves not

so much the emancipatory forces of social self-consciousness as the destructive potential of psychic immiseration. 33 And so today the second empirical claim entailed in the Marxist category of labour is manifestly questionable; hardly anyone is still convinced of the emancipatory effect of labour as such.

Precisely such troublesome historical experiences as these have in the century since Marx shaken the philosophical-historical foundations of Marxian theory. Even if this is not exclusively the case,<sup>34</sup> within Marxism today one finds as a consequence that the labour paradigm has been largely, and finally, discarded. Also participating in Marxism's process of self-enlightenment are those attempts at a redemptive critique which as a whole today represent the counter-movement against the economic functionalism of traditional Marxism; only by letting the labour paradigm recede into the background are they in a position to upgrade other social spheres in relation to production and to make them instead the reference point for an analysis of capitalist society.

To be sure, none of the three approaches take into consideration the consequences of the respective paradigm shifts they comprise. For in taking leave of the labour paradigm one also loses the action-theoretic connection by means of which Marx had been able to link his theory of emancipation to the project of an analysis of society. Because the three versions of a redemptive critique wholly neglect this resultant problem, they also do not have to face the question of what new action-theoretic framework could replace that of the category of labour. Instead, each advances as a basic concept of social analysis that particular type of action which defines the characteristics of the sphere of action they have privileged: thus the game-theoretic approach endorses the strategic actions of individuals, the culture-theoretic approach endorses the expressive action of social groups, and finally the power-theoretic approach endorses the techniques of power embedded in institutions as a basic concept for social theory. In so doing, beyond the special problems arising from their respective paradigms, all three then run into a common difficulty: they can no longer fill the action-theoretic gap that opens up once Marx's concept of labour is sacrificed as the pivotal concept of Marxist social theory; for the concepts of action they offer instead are not sufficiently complex to support the requirements both of a theory of emancipation and an analysis of society. At least two further consequences follow from this:

- (a) All three proposals for salvaging Marxism lack a substitute for what Marx called "alienation" or "reification." Since the basic concepts they themselves offer no longer include any aspects of a theory of emancipation, they also lack any criterion with which to gauge failed or suc-

cessful socialization. Hence they can no longer of themselves develop a sensorium with which to ascertain what aspects of capitalism have failed in a non-instrumental sense.

- (b) But it is not only this diagnostic potential, but also all normative potential that vanishes in these three new approaches to Marxism. Because Marx held labour to be the critical sphere of human self-realization, he could normatively measure a society's degree of justice by the opportunities it afforded for self-realization in labour. 35 If the concept of labour is replaced by some other concept of action, lacking any normative component, then the possibility of such a normative critique is unavoidably lost. Thus all three approaches are forced to adopt a moral relativism, since they can no longer of themselves ground the criteria by which contemporary capitalism can be criticized.

The above provides a sufficiently clear sketch of the tasks facing an updating of Marxism today.

### III

Each of these attempts at a redemptive critique of Marxism outlined above sets its sights lower than did Marx in his theory of capitalism. On the other hand, Marx's aims can no longer be realized in the way he intended, for the conceptual means he developed have since become questionable. How, then, can we today seek to take up his intentions without systematically falling short of the theoretical aims he set himself? In other words, how can we once again incorporate a concept of emancipation and an analysis of capitalism within the same social theory, given that the Marxian paradigm of labour can no longer serve as the categorial link between the two? In order to at least indicate a first step in this direction, I shall begin by taking another look at Marx's own proposed solution; for the premises on which his concept of labour rests without a doubt permit us to reformulate his intentions at a more abstract level, and thus to render them fruitful once again for the present.

The conviction that a human being can only achieve a satisfactory identity by experiencing the integral accomplishments of his or her own labour is a basic premise underlying the Marxist concept of labour. A person's "dignity" or "respect," terms Marx did not hesitate to utilize at various points in his work, presuppose that through autonomous labour he or she can give visual form to his or her own abilities. It is this "conception of an aesthetics of production" that serves as a normative framework underpinning Marx's diagnosis of alienation and reification. Capitalism alienates the subject from herself because, with its com-

pulsion to accumulate, it creates an economic imperative that destroys just that character of work as accomplishment which is the presupposition of successful identity formation. 36 In this regard, Marx does not conceive of the class struggle merely as a strategic conflict over the acquisition of goods or powers of command; rather, it represents a kind of moral conflict in which an oppressed class is fighting to achieve the social conditions for its self respect. Marx does not, therefore, view the unequal distribution of goods and burdens *as such* to be the underlying cause that triggers off the class struggle; rather, unequal distribution only provides such a cause insofar as it results in a one-sided destruction of the conditions for social identity. The philosophical-historical interpretation which provides the overall framework within which Marx's analysis of capitalist class society is embedded thus incorporates a perspective that derives not from the logic of labour but from the logic of recognition (Sorel/Gramsci): under the economic conditions of capitalism the process of mutual recognition among human beings is interrupted because one social group is deprived of precisely those preconditions necessary to obtain respect. This premise one we would locate today in a theory of intersubjectivity remains concealed in Marx's own work since he restricts his concept of human identity to a productivist description. It is only because Marx considers the experience of the integral accomplishments of one's own labour to be the central presupposition for one's respect as a human being, that it never becomes clear that his real goal is the social conditions for mutual recognition among subjects.

To make this socio-philosophical perspective fruitful for the present day, we thus have to reverse that concretizing move by which Marx bound the conditions for human identity formation to his concept of labour. For the concrete conditions of respect and recognition among individuals are subject to historical and cultural change; what can be considered an unchanging feature throughout history, however, is the fact that individuals always have to struggle for the social conditions under which they can achieve recognition and respect.<sup>37</sup> By means of this more abstract formulation, Marx's intuitions can once again be brought to bear in a contemporary social theory. But in that case we can no longer consider the orthodox core of Marxism to be a specific method, as it was for Lukács, or, for that matter, a certain set of sociological premises. Rather, the core is solely a philosophical-historical perspective: namely, that which views social development from the vantage point of struggles for social recognition. Admittedly, such a basic philosophical-historical thought is more demanding in theoretical terms than would appear at first sight to the case; it contains at least two theoretical pre-

suppositions for which scientifically established arguments must still be furnished. Firstly, an historically effective morality must be shown to exist in the efforts of subjects to achieve self-respect. The driving force that is at work in practical conflicts and that spurs social development would be this struggle to achieve the conditions of social recognition. In order to be able to assert this, it would, secondly, be necessary to detail the social conditions in the respective societies that lead to damage to self-respect. It must be possible to describe forms of social organization as specific relations of damaged recognition, if it is to prove possible to demonstrate plausibly that it is a struggle for recognition that opens the way for moral progress. An analysis of the feelings of injured self-respect and damaged recognition, feelings which would form the motivational raw material in the struggle to bring about the social conditions for recognition, would form the theoretical link binding the two strands of the approach. 38

A paradigm of recognition thus elaborated could, in my view, be a worthy successor, on a more abstract level to be sure, of Marx's paradigm of labour. In it the theory of emancipation and the analysis of society can be connected once more in a theory of action; for the practical contents of such a process of struggle for recognition are constituted by moral norms, norms by means of which capitalism can be criticized as a social relation of damaged recognition.

## Chapter 2

### Work and Instrumental Action:

#### On the Normative Basis of Critical Theory

In recent discussions of historical materialism, the relationship of Marx's critique of political economy to a critical social theory directed toward political action has come into question. The thesis that there is a "crisis in the theory of revolution" indicates that the analysis of capital, the centerpiece of Marx's theoretical project, can no longer retain a leading role in the formulation of a critical social theory aiming at an interpretation of the contemporary situation of late capitalism which is oriented toward practical action. The function of the critique of political economy in a theory of class struggle was always disputed in the history of Marxism, but it has never before been questioned to such a great extent. Although the fundamental methodological notion of the mutual translatability of not the thematic convergence of the systematic analysis of capital and a practically-oriented theory of revolution forms the basis of the Marxian tradition, it is precisely this theoretical complementarity which is currently in doubt. The categories of a crisis theory based upon the analysis of capital are apparently no longer adequate to describe the altered crisis areas and conflict potentials of late capitalist society. This incongruity has come to dominate both the theoretical and the political sides of Marxist discussion.

Marx's conception of work has assumed a central position among the theoretical doubts concerning the relevance of Marxism as a theory of human emancipation. 1 In its original form, the concept is a categorical connective between the critique of political economy and the materialist theory of revolution: the concept of work should not only designate the dimension of social practice within which the human world is constructed out of its natural setting and socially reproduced, but should also determine the level of action at which knowledge which can transform domination may potentially be released and thus also make possible the evolutionary expansion of social freedom. Marx wishes to understand work not only from the standpoint of economic growth, but also from the normative position of practical, emancipatory self-development [*Bildung*]. The critique of political economy is therefore intended to describe the subordination of "living labor" to the principle of capitalist exploitation, and at the same time to reveal the fundamental assumptions of a materialist theory of revolution.

The result of the privileged status of this category is that for Marx, and for the tradition which can be traced to him, the concept of work necessarily performs multiple functions, which are carried out in a variety of ways. At the level of social theory, Marx wishes to use the term "social labor" to designate the form of reproduction characteristic of human existencethe cooperative appropriation of external nature. Here, the technical structure and social organization of work becomes the key to a theory of human history. In his theory of knowledge, especially in his critique of Feuerbach, Marx depicts social labour as the practical context within which the human species gains cognitive access to reality. Here, the knowledge resulting from the cooperative appropriation of nature becomes the basis of a materialist critique of science. At the practical-normative level, finally, Marx seeks to entrust social labor with the function of a conscious learning process, in which working subjects become aware of the fact that their capabilities and needs go far beyond the possibilities permitted by the given social structure. Here, the emancipatory perspectives released in the process of social production become the foundation of a theory of social revolution.

Because it performs this three-fold function, the concept of work has assumed a dominant position in Marxist thought. But this position has not remained unassailed in the subsequent development of critical social theory. At least in the philosophical traditions in which the action-theoretic basis of Marx's conceptual structure has not already been replaced by objectivism, the primacy of the concept of work in social theory and in the theory of knowledge has come into question. In the field of social theory, the category of communicative action has been



added to the category of social labor as a result of the intersubjective turn taken by critical theory; 2 or it has been replaced in structuralist interpretations of Marx by a typology of forms of *praxis* necessary for social reproduction.<sup>3</sup> In the field of epistemology, the social conditions for the constitution of knowledge either have been transferred to the sphere of social distribution, with the aim of establishing a socio-genetic theory<sup>4</sup> or have been enlarged with the dimension of symbolic interaction, with the aim of establishing a materialist pragmatism.<sup>5</sup>

From the viewpoint of the immanent connection between Marx's critique of political economy and practically oriented social theory, however, only the third function of the Marxist concept of work, that which emphasizes the emancipatory content of social labor, is of systematic interest. Hans Jürgen Krahel has sought to examine Marx's concept of work from this perspective in his essay "Production and Class Struggle". He asks "whether Marx has succeeded in presenting the dialectic of work, i.e., social labor, not only as a misfortune in the utilization of capital [*ein kapitalverwertendes Unglück*], but also as an anticapitalistic [*kapitalnegatorische*], productive, emancipatory force that is, whether Marx has proven that the forces of production as such can also be a means of liberation."<sup>6</sup> I would like to contribute indirectly to the solution of this problem by attempting, in opposition to the dilution of the concept which has occurred since Marx, to reconstruct a critical conception of work. Following a brief introductory presentation of the Marxist perspective (I), I shall follow the post-Marxist social history of the concept of work (II) up to the point where Jürgen Habermas introduces a new dimension to the categorical horizon with his concept of instrumental action. Through a critique of this concept (III) I shall seek to outline the contours of a critical conception of work.

## I

Marx sought to establish the action-theoretic basis of historical materialism within the conceptual framework provided by the modern concept of labor. He implicitly combines in his own understanding of social labor the various conceptual elements, with the help of which modern social philosophers have sought to understand the process of historical change which has gradually revealed that socially organized production, and not the political and symbolic activity of the ruling classes, is the practical foundation of all social development. Modern philosophers have reacted to this concrete historical experience by removing from the concept of work the negative connotations which it

has possessed in the antique and Christian traditions and by decisively revaluing it as an active and social achievement. 7 In a certain sense, the Marxian theoretical project marks the conclusion of this process of conceptual reinterpretation.

Marx attends in particular to the economization of the concept of labor, by which classical political economy traces the epochal experiences of geographical expansion and acceleration of economic growth back to labor as a factor of production. The political, symbolic or contemplative practices of the ruling groups are seen to be unproductive and are thus removed from their predominant position in the valuation of human behavior, to be replaced first by agrarian, then by craft and industrial work as value-creating activity. This revaluation of work in economic theory finds its final expression in Marx's so-called labor theory of value [*Arbeitswertlehre*].

However, Marx also brings into the economic concept of labor the emancipatory element which allows Hegel to understand work as one constitutive aspect of self-consciousness. In his model of externalization [*Entäußerungsmodell*] Hegel retranslates the political-economic conception of labor into the consciousness-oriented theoretical language of transcendental philosophy by conceiving the activity of working on an object as the objectification of the contents of consciousness. Because Hegel supposes, in opposition to traditional philosophy, that the product of work has a retroactive significance for the working subject, he is able to interpret work as the material instantiation [*Veranschaulichung*] of cognitive abilities, and thus also as a process of intellectual self-development.<sup>8</sup> Marx adopts this dimension of meaning in the concept of work when he criticizes the capitalist organization of labor as a socially alienating relationship, which gradually abstracts the worker from the constructive and objectifying character of the labor process.

Yet Marx was only able to work his way to the truly critical content of this conception of work with the help of the theoretical framework which he gained from another philosophical theory of his time, Feuerbach's anthropological materialism. For it was not the history of mind's self-development as interpreted by the philosophy of identity, but the anthropologically understood life-process of the human species, which served as the interpretive backdrop against which Marx could depict the objectifying activity of work as the specifically human capacity for objectification. It is precisely this capacity which is fraudulently appropriated from the working subject in capitalist society. Feuerbach's anthropological species concept, which was meant to expose the attributes of Hegel's concept of mind [*Geist*] as previously misunderstood natural characteristics of man, is thus the third intellectual

component of Marx's concept of work. Only at this point is the conceptual complexity achieved which enables the corporeal activity of working on [*bearbeiten*] nature to be understood both economically, as a factor of production, and morally, as a process of intellectual self-development. 9

The concept of social labor [*gesellschaftliche Arbeit*], in which Marx integrates the central elements of the modern idea of work, determines the categorical structure of his theory of society. The suggestive force which proceeds from the notion that the human species becomes conscious of its needs and capacities through the very process of social labor by which it reproduces its own existence permits the concept of work to become the categorical paradigm of Marx's historical materialism. According to the philosophical assumptions upon which both the anthropologically-oriented theory of alienation in Marx's early writings and the theory of capitalist development in his economic works are founded, world history is defined as the self-generation, self-preservation and self-emancipation of society through work. In his early writings, he argues positively from the standpoint of the potential subjectivity given to man in the specifically human capacity of work. In his economic writings, he provides a negative analysis of the repression of this living labor potential by the rise of capital. In both, with the help of the anthropologically radicalized model of work as a process of externalization, Marx interprets the historical epoch of capitalism as a socio-economic formation which makes it structurally difficult or impossible for the working subject to identify himself in his own products.<sup>10</sup> Nowhere in his writings, however, does Marx explicitly describe the categorical limits which differentiate this model of social labor from other types of activity. Nor does he discuss the limits within which his conception of work can or should be applied to the explanation of individual or collective behavior. Instead this paradigmatic concept appears in all of his works as an accompanying figure of thought which takes different shapes during the various stages through which his theoretical project is worked out.

In this unclearly utilized figure of thought Marx blurs the boundaries between that kind of activity involved in working on nature and that kind which, in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, he explicitly thematizes, under the title of 'practical-critical activity', as political emancipatory *praxis*. In these very same *Theses* the theoretical concept of revolutionary action is oddly fused together with the concept of work, used here with an epistemological intent, under the vague general conception of 'praxis.'<sup>11</sup> As a consequence of this formulation of the emancipatory conception of work, Marx apparently no longer supposes merely that in the

expanding process of cooperative work upon nature the human species recognizes its own capacities in its products, but rather attributes further an immediately revolutionizing power to work activities. He moves from the indirect formation of subjectivity in work, a process grounded in the material instantiation of practical competences, back to the theme of the constitutive role of work in the formation of political consciousness. Since the basic philosophical paradigm of this theory homogenizes all modes of action in conformity with the model of a subject working upon concrete reality, Marx finds himself compelled to follow a consequential [*folgenreich*] course of thought which seeks to explicate the structure of emancipatory practical action solely against the categorical background of the concept of work. It is only this categorical monism, to which a number of interpreters of Marx have drawn attention in recent years, 12 which offers him the possibility of supposing that social work in the emancipatory sense also has a revolutionary function. Marx wanted to secure this revolutionizing effect of social labor in two action-theoretic models of argument; models, that is, which are to be distinguished from the economic conception which decisively shaped his later writings and which focussed on systemic crises precipitated by the growth in productive forces typical of capitalism. These action-theoretic models are found, on the one hand, in connection with the anthropological theory of alienation in the *Paris Manuscripts*, and on the other hand, in a number of scattered statements concerning the process of industrial production found in the context of the writings on political economy.

In the first argumentative model Marx seeks to comprehend work as an unmediated formative process in which the working subjects are able as a result of the encounter with themselves in the products of their labor to recognize themselves individually and collectively as subjects of constructive-historical action. This idea can be seen as a kind of empirical-historical application of the developmental theory of consciousness found in the dialectic of lordship and bondage in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*. Marx infers from this basic philosophical-historical conception that human history must be understood as a process entailing the successive objectification of all specifically human 'essential powers' in the 'life activity of the species'.<sup>13</sup> The socio-economic institution of private property, however, distorts this historical process of the unfolding of human needs and capacities, because the working subject is no longer free to objectify herself in her own products, but rather produces material property only for the leisured classes. This social-historical fact, which Marx clothes in the formula of alienated labor, is veiled and rendered ahistorical by political economy insofar as it

categorically equates individual work with 'gainful employment' [*Erwerbstätigkeit*]. Against this conceptual narrowing Marx now brings to bear the idea, which he shares with Hegel, of an emancipatory surplus of work activity. Social emancipation from the situation of alienation is only supposed to be achieved through just those activities in which the human species potential is both repressed and at the same time apparently preserved, that is to say, in social labor so may the sentence reading "self-alienation, externalization of essence, objectification and dissolution of human reality as self-redemption" <sup>14</sup> be interpreted. This thought leads Marx finally to the claim that the emancipation of workers, the self-liberation of those acting under alienated work conditions, represents in the same historic act also the liberation of humanity, since the practical abolition of the alienated conditions of social labor also guarantees the continuation of the historical process of the objectification of all 'essential powers' of humanity.

At no place in his *Paris Manuscripts*, now, does Marx further establish the key thesis of this argument: namely, that the emancipation of workers should be amenable to explanation on the basis of the immanent relations of alienated labor. Marx has not shown himself capable of argumentatively bridging the gap between the anthropologically established character of work as an act of objectification and the historical situation of alienated social labor. This gap would have to be closed in order to attribute an enlightening and revolutionizing effect to the organization of social labor established under capitalism. In the dialectic of lordship and bondage, Hegel shows that the bondsman achieves independent self-consciousness in opposition to the lord by way of the self-assurance and self-discipline resulting from working upon nature. This dialectic thus provides Marx a philosophical-historical background theme, but not an interpretive key to the empirical analysis of capitalist social relations. An unmediated connection onto this figure of thought is forbidden to Marx for the simple reason that, given the basis of his theoretical intention, he must make comprehensible a social consciousness pressing for the transformation of an alienated work situation precisely not, as was the case with Hegel, one aiming at intersubjective recognition with the lord. Thomas Meyer has brought together the conditions hindering Marx in his reinterpretation of the dialectic of lordship and bondage that would have done justice to his own intentions:

(1) In relation to the 'revolutionary antithesis', Marx aims, in the realization of the principle of the proletariat, not at a mediation with the consciousness of the lord, but rather at its replacement by

the new consciousness of the bondsman; (2) for this reason the consciousness of the lord which has been objectified through the mediating agency of the instrumentalized bondsman can also not become part of the latter's own self-consciousness through his encounter with the concrete products of his work, since here it has precisely not to do with the recognition by the lord on the level of the conditions already established by him, but rather (3) it has to do with the realization of an orientation that is new in principle and which is denied in the current principle of work. Furthermore, (4) the possibility for the bondsman to obtain an adequate self-consciousness in Hegel already presupposes the pre-existence of such a consciousness prior to the start of work, even if on the side of the lord. 15

Marx also leaves unanswered then the theoretical problem, which presents itself with the argumentative figure of the Hegelian dialectic of lordship and bondage, when in the further development of his theory he removes the two unconnected facets of the concept of work in the *Paris Manuscripts* from their normative-anthropological frame of reference and projects them into the empirical social history of work. The idea of work as having the fundamental character of a process of material instantiation, which in the early writings provided the normative backdrop for the investigation of alienated labor, was preserved by Marx in the economic writings by the empirically rich image of the self-regulated work activity of craftsmen intimately familiar with their object. Henceforth the guiding normative image for Marx's analysis was enriched by the idea of a unified work activity, autonomously planned and carried out by the working subject. In place of the anthropological concept of an objectification of specifically human needs in the 'life activity of the species' there thus emerges in the *Grundrisse*, in the critique of the concept of work in political economy, the concept of a productive process guided by the knowledge of the working subject himself and demanding the totality of the human capacities for action:

But Smith has no inkling whatever that this overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity and that, further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits hence as self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour . . . Really free working, e.g., composing, is at the same time precisely the most damned seriousness, the most intense exertion. The work of

material production can achieve this character only (1) when its social character is posited, (2) when it is of a scientific and at the same time general character, not merely a human exertion as a specifically harnessed natural force, but exertion as subject, which appears in the production process not in a merely natural, spontaneous form, but as an activity regulating all the forces of nature. 16

The concept of alienated labor so central to the *Paris Manuscripts* is supposed to characterize the reversal whereby a work activity which structures subjectivity becomes instead one directed by the object. In the economic writings Marx has altered this concept so that it fits the capitalist reality of mechanized and fragmented work. Under the title of 'abstract labor', in which the analysis sought to determine the characteristic capitalist process of abstraction from the concrete content of work activities in terms of a realization of value, Marx describes the gradual dissolution of all craftsmanlike work activities in the capitalist production process:

This economic relationthe character which capitalist and worker have as the extremes of a single relation of productiontherefore develops more purely and adequately in proportion as labour loses all the characteristics of art; as it particular skill becomes something more and more abstract and irrelevant, and as it becomes more and more a *purely abstract activity*, a purely mechanical activity, hence indifferent to its particular form; a merely *formal* activity, or, what is the same, a merely *material* [*stofflich*] activity, activity pure and simple, regardless of its form. 17

This type of work activity, detached from the empirical knowledge of the working subject and broken into blind component operations, forms hereafter for Marx the contrasting pole to that form of social labor which he describes using the model of craft work. As a consequence of such an analysis, however, he entangles himself in the duality of two historical forms of social labor without possessing the conceptual means to account for the developmental process that could mediate between them. At this point Marx did not pursue further his earlier radical intention, for example, his aim to understand the work process directly as a formative process setting free moral-practical motives. Had this been the case, he would also have been forced to characterize the capitalist production process as a communicative context in which the supposition would not have been lost, among working subjects, that the character of craftsmanlike work procedures was that of a process of objectification.



The working subjects, in other words, would always already counter-factually anticipate the features of a self-contained, self-directed work procedure which embodied the worker's knowledge. Such a course of thought, however, is not to be found with Marx. Instead, in order to attribute nonetheless a radicalizing power to the work process in the framework of his economic writings, he there switches to an instrumental model of argumentation in which the capitalist production process alone still takes on the role of a medium that organizes and disciplines the proletariat.

This second conceptual model no longer argues from within the unmediated tension between organic craftsmanlike work activities and mechanized industrial labor, but instead pursues directly the stages of the capitalist production process. The change in perspective which Marx thereby carries out is compelled methodologically by the restructuring of his social theory into the analysis of capital, which by proceeding as an immanent critique is only able to thematize relations of social action according to the formal determinations of capital. 18 In this argumentative model, Marx reckons that the capitalist organization of the work process would, as it were, socialize the working class into a disciplined, organized and technically qualified collective subject. Three hypotheses concerning the developmental process of capitalist industry converge in this explanatory effort: the first, in particular, is that the centralization and concentration of capital would draw more and more workers together at any given place of production, thereby giving visible evidence to the 'power of the proletariat'. Secondly, the development of qualifications necessary for work in capitalist industry would allow both for the formation of workers' capacities for cooperation and at the same time for the development of self-discipline. Third, and finally, the progressive development in the technology of production would press educational institutions oriented toward industry beyond inculcating merely instrumental action competences, thereby increasing the proletariat's access to reserves of social knowledge. As a consequence of these assumptions Marx can then take as given a continuous feedback process between experiences of oppression, intellectual working-through and disciplined preparedness for resistance. This process would then result in the revolt of the social class of wagedworkers against capitalism. It is in the context of this part of his theory of revolution that Marx speaks of the 'school of the factory':

Along with the constant decrease in the number of capitalist magnates, who usurp and monopolize all the advantages of this process of transformation, the mass of misery, oppression, slav-



ery, degradation and exploitation grows; but with this there also grows the revolt of the working class, a class constantly increasing in numbers, and trained, united and organized by the very mechanism of the capitalist process of production. 19

In places such as these Marx has, in the framework of his writings on the critique of political economy, held fast to a theoretical concept of work which makes revolutionary claims. However, in place of an argumentative model that seeks to explain the possibility of social emancipation directly on the basis of the educational potential of work, there has emerged the less ambitious model of the working class becoming technically qualified and disciplined through industrial factory work. In the economic theory of his late writings, Marx obviously no longer wants to entrust to social labor the practical-moral learning potential that he must presume it to have if he wants to explain the emancipatory ambitions of the proletariat on the basis of the action-experiences of work. Instead, he now wants to attribute to social labor only the learning potential entailed in a process of technical education that will strategically support the proletariat's struggle for liberation.

The first model of argumentation leads him into the difficulty wherein he must presuppose in work a formative moral-practical potential which exercises a normatively enlightening power reaching beyond the unjust relations of capitalism in precisely those situations of alienation where, according to his analysis, the capitalist organization of work has emptied work activity of its capacity to instantiate essential human powers and thus has deprived it of its formative potential. Marx's second model of argumentation, on the other hand, shows itself incapable of supporting the claims established through the privileging of social labor in the theory of revolution. At this argumentative level Marx is only able to suggest how the proletariat learns intellectually to refine its already developed critical-normative consciousness and to strategically translate this consciousness into capacities for practical-revolutionary activity. In what way, however, the formative process for this emancipatory consciousness itself is supposed to be anchored in the action-structures of social work finally remains, in this argumentative model, as unclear as in the early writings.

Marx was never able to extricate himself from the basic conceptual difficulties into which the revolutionary claims of his concept of work clearly lead him. His emancipatory revaluation of the concept of work placed upon it powerful theoretical demands. Marx sought at every stage in the development of his theory to trace the social revolutionary learning process which should lead beyond capitalism back to the im-

manent relations of social labor, without, however, having developed a convincing argumentative model to account for this connection.

This conceptual dilemma represents an inheritance in the history of Marxism which has provoked numerous and extended theoretical attempts to make plausible the emancipatory meaning of social labor in order to be able to hold onto the immanent relation between the critique of political economy and the theory of revolution. Among the ranks of these interpretive efforts the objectivist versions of the theory of revolution epitomize the reductive stage in Marxist thinking. The trivial psychological concepts of the theory of immiseration<sup>20</sup> and the technological versions of historical materialism<sup>21</sup> are examples of interpretations which have resolutely eliminated the question concerning the relation between social emancipation and social labor, for which Marx sought an answer in the tension between organic craftsmanlike forms of work and the fragmented labor of capitalist industry. In these objectivist interpretations of Marx this question was relaced by that concerning the revolutionizing effects resulting from the development of the capitalist forces of production. In this manner the dimensions of the Marxist problematic drop completely from sight, since the conditions for the possibility of processes of political emancipation are no longer thought to take place on the level of the social experiences of acting subjects, but rather have been projected onto the level of autonomous system processes. Beyond the course of this tradition there is, to be sure, also an opposing philosophical tradition in the history of Marxism which itself sought to answer the question, posed implicitly in Marx's theory, concerning the relationship between work and emancipation on a practical-philosophical level of argumentation.

## II

The experiential basis of Marx's conception of work is the historical fact that both meaningful, handicraft-oriented and atomized, industrial forms of work existed simultaneously in the early phase of capitalist industrialization. In a certain sense, the complexity of this central concept is the categorical expression of the factually equal status of these different forms of social labor at that time. This constellation collapsed in the last third of the nineteenth century with the second surge forward in industrialization. The planned and organized use of developing technologies for the accumulation of capital, which began with the opening up of new energy sources, gradually pushed back from the centers of direct production those object-intimate, concretely-overseeable forms of

artisanry, on the basis of which Marx and Hegel had obviously concluded that work can be a process of constructive objectification, and forced them into economically marginal areas of secondary production (maintenance, preparatory processing, and the like).<sup>22</sup> With the rise of large-scale industry and the transition to mass production, the single, complete work procedure was divided into partial, individually-controllable operations and adapted to the forced, mechanical rhythm of the machine. This efficiency driven intensification of the human work process was the basis of the rapid and relatively steady economic growth in the period of prosperity between 1896 and 1913. Since that time, under the pressure of the profit motive, new scientific and technical knowledge has been constantly applied to the rationalization of industrial production techniques.

The decisive stimulus for the achievement of increased productivity by means of the thoroughgoing rationalization of concrete work operations came from Taylor's industrial researches, which resulted in the concept of scientific management. Proposed here was the centralization of all knowledge relating to production in a unified factory management, which would then reduce each step in the production process and all work operations to their basic elements with the help of exact time and motion observations, redetermine the succession of particular steps in order to avoid lost time, and attempt in this way to discover the most economically efficient organization of work. Harry Braverman has described three fundamental aspects of the structural change in the organization of work which have followed the institution of Taylor's principles. (1) The industrial production process as a whole has been systematically detached from the technical knowledge of the working subject. Braverman calls this "the dissociation of the labor process from the skills of the workers. The labor process is rendered independent of craft, tradition, and the workers' knowledge."<sup>23</sup> (2) In the organization of the industrial plant, technical planning has been strictly separated from the actual execution of work, so that finally, (3) the factory leadership's institutionalized monopoly of knowledge makes possible the most minute control of the entire work process. "It is in the age of the scientific-technical revolution that management sets itself the problem of grasping the process as a whole and controlling every element of it, without exception."<sup>24</sup>

The economic rationalization of capitalist industrial work, which Braverman sees as the successive expropriation of the shared, traditionally acquired knowledge of the work force by the scientifically educated factory leadership, had led to a highly differentiated breakdown of the work process. In the past few decades, the qualification level of

workers has not risen uniformly at a rate parallel to that of the mechanization of production, but has instead become polarized. New forms of unskilled work have been added to the simple manual tasks and repetitive piece work operations which make up the great majority of jobs, while the complex intellectual tasks which are more open to individual initiative have become concentrated in a relatively few hands. 25 With this shift in the constellation of social labor, the causal relation which Marx believed to exist between the intensification of labor productivity and a constant increase in the workers' level of qualification has ceased to be empirically plausible. The revolutionary notion that an intellectual and strategic socialization of the proletariat is possible within the framework of capitalist industrial work has foundered upon the reality of massive dequalification. In the same way, the underlying conceptual tension within which the young Marx attempted to interpret social labor as a practical and moral learning process has, with the universalization of mechanized work, lost all of its original vigor. Thus, it is the fundamental structural change in capitalist industrial labor which has finally brought to light the categorical difficulties in which Marx involved himself when he attempted to develop a theory of revolution on the basis of his conception of work.

This same process of radical change in the forms of social labor, however, has also decisively reduced the role which the concept of work has played in the development of social theory after Marx. As a result of the influence of Taylor's principles upon the organization of industrial work, the rationalization of production techniques which set in relatively early in the development of capitalism has reached a level at which most types of work have lost any resemblance to self-enclosed craft activity. Under the pressure exerted by the experience of this rapid mechanization of industrial work, social philosophers and social scientists since the turn of the century have gradually come to over-emphasize the technical and economically functional aspects of the concept of work, thus draining it of the emancipatory significance which Hegel and Marx had claimed for it and allowing these aspects of its meaning to emigrate into the realm of cultural criticism.

The history of sociology provides an outstanding example of this gradual 'cleansing' of traditional normative contents from the concept of work. Here, in the social-scientific theory of the work process, the other side of this conceptual reduction had been the upgrading of acts of work to the status of 'achievements' or 'performances', the social organization of which is now investigated exclusively from the viewpoint of insuring increased productivity. This conceptual change is accompanied by social-philosophical investigations which intentionally call into

question the special categorical status granted in philosophy to the concept of work since the end of the eighteenth century.

The sociology of work first emerged in Germany at the beginning of this century in the form of empirical investigations which took as their problem the cultural and psychological significance of factory work for the industrial proletariat. The early research of Adolf Levenstein and the Association for Society and Politics [*Verein für Sozialpolitik*] places social scientific analyses of transformed work conditions, carried out by means of opinion surveys and case studies, in the context of a socio-cultural theoretical framework which inquired concerning the social effects of mechanized industrial labor. Since the categories central to this theoretical framework still retain a concept of work which, by attributing the power of personality formation to productive activities which transform nature, carries on the social-philosophical tradition of the nineteenth century, these studies are able to disclose analytically the negative consequences of the untrammelled rationalization of the industrial labor process. In his sociological interpretation of 'work enjoyment', Christian von Ferber examined these normative implications which the first generation of industrial sociologists allowed to enter into the categorical apparatus underlying their empirical investigations. During the beginning phase of German sociology, the concept of work carried on unbroken the emancipatory-theoretical hopes which the social philosophy of Marx and Hegel, under the impression of early industrialization, had pinned upon the emancipatory and formative effects of social labor though also considerably below the reflective level achieved in their writings. "Work is an essential component of the cultural process, by means of which every worker at least in principle participates in the unity of culture. Work comprises a privileged vehicle for the development of personality by contributing to the unfolding of the emotional life and the intellectual experience of the worker. In short: next to its economic function, work takes on a key cultural and ethical value; it is both the result and the unfolding of historical forces." 26

This cultural concept of labor, which the investigations in the sociology of industry at the beginning of the century share as a common presupposition, leads von Ferber back to the tradition attributing a craftsmanlike image to petty-bourgeois society. This imagery still exercised an influence in academic sociology, which had been equipped with the interpretive authority of society, although its socio-structural presuppositions had historically already lost their meaning. The culture-theoretic and knowledge constitutive interest of this early sociology of work drew both its interpretive power for sociological theory

as well as its limited possibilities for application from a normative perspective which idealized a specific situation of production, characterized by craftsmanlike work procedures permeated with meaning, so that against this positive backdrop the social consequences of mechanized industrial labor would stand out all the more vividly. The critical-interpretive accomplishments of such an industrial sociology grew out of the cross-fertilization of culture-theoretic questions and the empirical sociology of work. From the perspective suggested by Christian von Ferber's sociology of knowledge, however, such efforts must come to nothing, since with the social-structural transformation of capitalism the petty-bourgeoisie image of society, which aims at a tangible transparency in all social action, no longer finds a representative social group. With the marginalization of craft work the cultural concept of work also loses its meaning for the sociology of industry. The interpretive theme which, in the shape of a craft work ideal, had thus far guided the sociology of industry was then changed into the utopian nostalgia of social scientific critiques of culture, for which this ideal merely provided a contrasting image to a world permeated by technology. 27 In the place of the culture-theoretic sociology of work, however, there emerged from this time on an industrial and organizational sociology purged of all normative principles.

In this theoretical development sociology lost an orientation to socio-philosophical problems which so long as it kept as a basic theoretical presupposition a concept of work which transcended the actual form of social labor could have secured it against its smooth integration into the capitalist process of rationalization. Now, however, industrial sociology is systematically integrated into the spiral of the technical rationalization of production in which every scientifically identified gap in the efficiency of the capitalist work process is closed by a newer, economically more efficient organization of labor. The concept of work which in this manner makes its way into sociology narrows investigations of the industrial work process to that dimension which is established at any given time by the advancing cycle of rationalization in the capitalist system of production. This concept prohibits both seeking to look beyond the organization of work established at any given time and any effort to call into question the extent of the mechanization of industrial labor.

The transformation of industrial sociology into a science of productive rationalization took as its historical point of departure the Hawthorne Studies, carried out under the leadership of Elton Mayo during the phase of prosperity enjoyed by U.S. American industry following the First World War. These studies stumbled more or less unin-

tionally upon the idea that communication and organizational morale could be treated as conditions of work performance in large industrial concerns. 28 Since then industrial sociology has gradually moved into the action-dimension of industrial labor in order systematically to bring under control the gaps in economic productivity and the political threats to efficiency which emerge at any given time. The field of investigation for industrial sociology has repeatedly been 'thematically stratified' [*thematisch Aufgestockt*]<sup>29</sup> through the introduction of additional analytic perspectives from sociology and psychology, though without having substantially left the guiding line aimed at the organizational intensification of work productivity set down by Taylor's principles.

This trend has been interrupted only by the very few sociological studies of industry which reflect the influence of a general social theory.<sup>30</sup> In general, however, the concept of work in this research has continued to be externally determined by the investigative priorities set by the technological rationalization of the production process. Earlier, from Hegel through Marx and onward until the beginnings of German industrial sociology, the concept of work had always included the possibility of a meaningful and self-regulating form of activity intimately related to its object, a possibility which found its empirical expression in the clearly visible completeness of craft labor. Sociology has since rid itself of this normative connection.

The gradual neutralization of the concept of work in sociology under the very direct pressure of procedures following Taylor's principles had been accompanied by attempts in social philosophy to dispute and dismantle by various means the special, emancipatory status of the nineteenth-century concept of work. Theoretical milestones along this path of disillusionment are certain portions of Max Scheler's phenomenological philosophy and Hannah Arendt's major work, *The Human Condition*.<sup>31</sup> For Max Scheler, the criticism of the special normative status apparently accorded to social labor by liberal and socialist theory since the eighteenth century was a lifelong preoccupation. The category 'activity' is the negative pole of both his ethic of material values and his sociological theory of culture. In his critique of the ethical distinction accorded to work, Scheler refers indirectly to the same social-historical process which he criticizes in his sociology of culture: the intrusion of technical, rationally goal-oriented forms of knowledge into the moral order of society. This negative fixation is already the determining viewpoint of his 1899 essay, "Work and Ethics,"<sup>32</sup> in which the expressed goal is to carry out a critique of the modern political ideology of work. He hopes to achieve a rapprochement in this area between philosophy and political economy, in order thereby to prepare the way for a systematic



renewal of the traditional Christian concept of work. Scheler relies upon a methodologically unsophisticated form of conceptual analysis to show that work is typically and necessarily an externally regulated and controlled type of behavior. In his view, the objective institutions of communal practice lend meaning to the execution of work, and the natural object regulates the temporal and objective structure of the act of work. The type of action called work is not in principle a self-determined activity open to initiative, according to Scheler, but is better characterized as merely burdensome toil and strenuous effort. Thus no normative significance for the construction of subjectivity may be ascribed to it. "For work, then the scales [of value] tip always in the direction of aversion; and the linguistic usage is thus justified, which often makes 'working' equal to 'suffering' and 'striving', as is the ancient folk idea, expressed in the book of humanity, that work is the accursed result of original sin." 33

Scheler has obviously defined work as being only that type of work activity which first achieved this representative form in the age of mechanized industry. One of the conclusions of his conceptual analysis, that "knowledge of the objective 'wherefore' tends to endanger and not to support the true character of the act of work,"<sup>34</sup> clearly reveals the real background of his argument. For it is only with the beginning of the rationalization of production technology according to Taylor's principles that both the systematic detachment of 'working knowledge' from the actual execution of work and the gradual fragmentation of the meaningful act of work into partial operations takes place. Scheler apparently reinterprets the results of this process into essential characteristics of work as such, when he ascribes to it the deficient status of an unreflected form of action.

It is at this point, and only here, that Scheler's considerations in moral philosophy coincide with Hannah Arendt's philosophy of action. While Scheler seeks to reestablish the traditional Christian valuation of work, Arendt's study aims to achieve a contemporary critical rehabilitation of the Aristotelian concept of 'praxis'. Proceeding from a diagnosis of the present era in which she shrinks back from the idea of a mechanically self-regulating society, Arendt attempts, with the help of a conceptual-historical approach, to recall out of the densely woven fabric of modes of human action the form of linguistically mediated human interaction, through which alone the human world can survive as a public, political structure. However, Hannah Arendt has also arranged the conceptual apparatus of her theory of action from the beginning in such a manner that work activity can be grasped within it only in the form in which it first appears in the age of mechanized industrial pro-



duction. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt systematically distinguishes three fundamental categories of action, separating intersubjective activity from work and 'labor', both of which she characterizes as basically non-social. In this analysis, both work and 'labor' are types of activity in which natural reality is manipulated according to technical rules. They have, however, different objective results. While work is described as the form of human action in which man obtains the necessities of life, in the act of 'labor' he creates from the materials of the natural world an enduring but nonetheless artificial environment:

The work of our hands, as distinguished from the labor of our bodies *homo faber* who makes and literally 'works upon' as distinguished from the *animal laborans* which labors and 'mixed with' fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice. 35

True action, on the other hand, is free from all contact with things. Speaking and doing are intertwined, as human subjects encounter one another and reveal their mutual subjectivity under the protection of the common qualities which they discover together. This is the form of behavior in which Arendt is actually interested. It is in this context that she returns to the Aristotelian concept of 'praxis', according to which true action [*praxis*] has no product and is meaningful in itself, as opposed to production [*poiesis*], in which a goal is pursued external to the action itself,<sup>36</sup> in order to show that the specifically human stage in history is reached only in the 'praxis' of mutual understanding laid out in the structures of linguistically mediated action. It is true that the materially bound forms of action, work and 'labor', have been valued most highly by modern philosophers since Locke, Smith and Marx, because they secure the economic and social basis for the reproduction of human society. But, according to Arendt, only communicative action among subjects makes it possible for the species to survive in a manner that is both historically open and humanly appropriate. This is the mode of behavior which first guarantees the clear communication of human concerns, gives cultural identity to social groups and provides room for practical political innovations.

A life without speech and without action, on the other hand and this is the only way of life that in earnest has renounced all appearance and all vanity in the biblical sense of the word is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.<sup>37</sup>

This philosophy of action provides the categorical framework for an analysis of the present situation, in which Hannah Arendt diagnoses modernity as alienation from the human world. With the development of industrial society, according to Arendt, the sphere of action [*praxis*], which is always highly fragile and unstable because it is constantly open to practical initiatives and free from all objective mediation, is gradually saturated by the non-social forms of behavior first by 'labor' and then by work. These forms come gradually to absorb all of the traditionally established forms of life which alone could provide a context for intersubjective interaction and thus secure a worthy reproduction of the human world. The entire critique contained in *The Human Condition* is directed at the victorious march of technology, before which precisely that further dimension of meaning retreats which Marx's social theory of work had added to the purely functional aspect of economic reproduction. Hannah Arendt reduces the category of work to the merely mechanical expenditure of reproducible labor power. At the same time, in her view, human action in general is being reduced to the behavioral model represented by this automated mode of work.

Arendt isolates the possibility of truly experiencing oneself in work through direct contact with the results of one's own labor, a possibility which Marx included in the range of meaning for his concept of work in the type of action which she calls 'labor'. This type alone, she maintains, "can provide self-assurance and satisfaction, and can even become a source of self-confidence throughout life." 38 The components of action, which were originally undivided in craft work, are thus permanently separated in Arendt's conceptual framework into two types of activity. With this clean break between reflexive, bodily work and experiential, truly 'manual' work, between work and 'labor', made in the interest of establishing a philosophical theory of action, Arendt already makes permanent a work situation which exists in the first place merely as a historical product of industrial work organized according to Taylor's principles. The theoretical dividing line which she draws between work and 'labor' simply depicts the formal social results of this historical process. With her own concepts, Arendt has rendered herself incapable of penetrating critically beneath this surface. For this reason, Arendt can in *The Human Condition* criticize the intrusion of mechanical and technical models of behavior into public life, but not the gradual mechanization of work itself.

Hannah Arendt's and Max Scheler's analysis are among those social philosophical investigations which, by categorically removing any potentially emancipatory significance from the act of working, have drawn only positive conclusions from the reduced level of humanity

found in industrial forms of work. But the change in the social role of work which forms the historical background for their arguments has also become the theoretical starting point at which critical philosophical Marxism presents itself with the problem, left unsolved by Marx, of the connection between social labor and social emancipation. The legacy of Marx's attempt to portray the capitalistic organization of the work process as an at least potentially revolutionary process of social self-development confronts this part of the Marxist tradition with the task of fitting the theory of action, which is the basis of Marx's theory of liberation, to the reality of capitalist industrial work, the shape of which has become clearer since Marx's time. As far as I can see, we may distinguish two fundamental conceptual strategies which have been used to find a solution to this problem consistent with a Marxist-oriented and 'praxis'-directed social philosophy: (1) the carrying over of all the emancipatory potential, which Marx assigns to the concrete act of work, to the 'praxis' of a transcendental or collective working subject; or (2) the one-sided narrowing of the concept of work to action directed exclusively at the practical domination of nature, as carried out, for example, by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Within the empirical frame of reference of capitalist productive relations, both solutions fail to deal adequately with the unresolved theoretical tension in Marx's concept of work, but rather in a certain sense take flight into the philosophy of history.

The first approach simply separates from empirical forms of work the potential subjectivity which Marx, following Hegel, had assigned to work activity, and projects it onto the reflective activity of a supra-individual process of action. The emancipatory achievements of reflection are carried over from the concrete act of work to the collective learning process of a social class, as in Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*, or to the mode of life with which the species in general constitutes the world, as in the early essays of Marcuse and in Sartre's work in Marxist theory. The price which these thinkers must pay in order to 'save' the emancipatory concept of work for the philosophy of history is a theory of society which is barely applicable any longer to the reality of industrial work. Although these two types of Marxist interpretation have different philosophical motivations, both of them can hold fast to the connection between social labor and social liberation only because they transfer to a kind of collective action, conceived as work, the qualities which Marx attributes to meaningfully self-contained craft work.

For Lukács this procedure takes the form of projecting the self direction of spirit [*Selbstbewegung des Geistes*] as portrayed in Hegel's *Logic*

upon the reflective process of the proletariat, which itself gathers together all particular elements of social labor into one thought process. 39 It is precisely through its engagement in work activities which have been reduced to their status as commodities, the most advanced stage of alienated labor, that the proletariat is able to uncover and expose the form of reification which, with the capitalist generalization of commodity relations, permeates all social relations, and to recognize itself as a value creating subject of this system of life. This collective process of reflection, which is anchored in the work process, is taken up by historical materialism so that it may assume the theoretical visage of being the self-understanding of the proletariat.

By contrast, in a pair of early essays written under the influence of Heidegger's existential ontology, 40 Herbert Marcuse bestowed upon the category of work the significance of a fundamental structure of human historicity. With this reinterpretation of the concept of work he also pursued the project of a theory of revolution in which the proletariat is able to take on the role of a subject of historical action this time because in processes of social labor it continuously actualizes all those characteristics that adhere to the human Dasein, as a work activity, in its entirety. 41

The conceptual strategy shared by all of these approaches, despite their differences, is finally revealed most clearly in Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "Materialism and Revolution," 42 which introduces central features of Hegelian Marxism into the phenomenological tradition of Marx interpretation. 43 Like the early Marcuse, Sartre interprets work ontologically as the fundamental mode of action in human existence. In addition, however, and in agreement with Hegel, he ascribes to work the characteristics of an activity in which the working subject experiences his own freedom in the formation of the natural object. In this way, work shows itself for Sartre to be identical with liberation. And since the proletariat is the social class of working subjects, it is qualified a priori to be the collective subject of the revolutionary process.

Truly, the liberating element for the oppressed is work. In this sense, it is work which is from the beginning revolutionary. Of course it is commanded, and assumes at first the form of the submission of the worker ... But at the same time, work offers a stimulus to concrete liberation even in such extreme cases, because it already signifies a negation of the accidental and capricious rule of the master. . . . The worker grasps himself as the possibility of changing the form of a material object by working upon it according to certain general rules. In other words: it is the determinism of matter which presents him the first image of his freedom. 44

Though it follows a different route, Sartre's argument leads to the same consequences as the revolutionary theories of Lukács and Marcuse. Because all three wish to retain an immanent connection between social emancipation and social labor without having to accept the objectivistic supposition of guaranteed progress via the development of the productive forces, they transfer the potential for liberation, which they no longer believe to lie in reality of industrial work, to a collective subject which is supposed to bring together all the empirically separated work processes. This subject then assumes the same conceptual role that the individual working subject had previously occupied. In this version, then, the concept of emancipation through work requires a monolithic concept of the revolutionary proletarian subject which is no longer bound to actual work experiences in the industrial plant.

The philosophy of history which Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer present in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* may perhaps be called the antithesis of these conceptions. While it is true that Horkheimer and Adorno offer a critique of reification which is in agreement with Lukács' interpretation of Marx, in their categorical framework, on the other hand, work has no status at all as a potentially emancipatory mode of action. Instead, it becomes the active, practical basis of domination, and thus represents its original historical form.

The same process of reification which Lukács derives from the historical generalization of commodity exchange is traced by Horkheimer and Adorno to the confrontation of the acting subject with nature. In their view, the emancipation of civilized man from the superior power of nature can only be successfully achieved through work activity in which technical control over external nature is combined with the suppression of the needs and drives of internal nature. The cognitive achievements serving this liberating end are connected from the beginning with work activity possessing the characteristics of a kind of rationality which, without distinction, objectifies both the natural and the social environment from the standpoint of establishing external control. The emancipation of civilized man, therefore, is from the beginning secured only at the cost of the development of instrumental reason. The underside of social progress, in which man systematically increases his control over external nature, is a social process of reification, in which he gradually loses his internal nature altogether because he treats it as he does the external world. 45

The philosophical-historical perspective by which Horkheimer and Adorno seek to look through the social relations of capitalism to the original socio-cultural conditions of humankind in order to be able to explain the origins of this process of social reification has removed from

work activity all of the influences on the formation of subjectivity which the Marxist tradition had previously ascribed to it. Work represents for them only the type of activity in which the working subject learns to shape and dominate his own instincts in order to intervene manipulatively in the processes of nature. The possibility of work activity which is wholly guided by a subjective plan, and which gradually reveals the subject's own capabilities in the realization of that plan, had disappeared from their theoretical view. 46

To be sure, with this move critical theory thereby falls into an odd argumentative paradox. Since it continues to adhere in principle to the philosophical paradigm of work found in Marxist theory, that is, to a model of action patterned solely according to the activity of working upon natural objects, it can only present the contrasting image of a society liberated from the complex of social reification in terms of the relation of the socialized individual to external nature. Since Adorno's philosophy has categorically reinterpreted social labor as the practical foundation of domination, but without relinquishing the conceptual framework structured solely around the subject's relation to the natural world, he is thereby forced to develop a philosophical aesthetics which theoretically outlines the possibility of a non-instrumental, mimetic encounter with the natural world. For if the objectifying grasp of natural complexes through work always brings at the same time the distortion of social relations through domination, then it is only the state of an aesthetic cooperation with external nature which also allows the domination free interpretation of inner nature. The guiding idea of a critical theory worked out in the context of this philosophical-historical perspective is thus that of a 'reconciliation with nature'.47

The critical theory of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* shares in its theory of action the conceptual framework employed in the explorations in Marxist theory carried out by Lukács, Marcuse and Sartre. For these theoretical proposals, social labor alone represents the dimension of social 'praxis' through which the human world can be built out of the natural life context and socio-culturally reproduced. The categorical framework within which this fundamental idea finds expression is modelled according to the relations of socially organized work upon external nature. Its basis is the subject who relates pragmatically to his natural environment. The model of action presupposed by them all thus requires these theoretical proposals to link the possible realization of social emancipation to a form of consciousness which is indeed built up in active relations to external nature, but at a point beyond the real, historical work relations established by the generalized rationalization of the work process according to Taylor's principles. The theoretical

means which are employed in the attempt to solve this problem are the philosophical-historical conception of an idealized, supra-individual work process, on the one hand, and, on the other, the aesthetic idea of a domination-free mimetic mode of dealing with nature.

The subject-object model which gives cause for these conceptual strategies is first burst by Jürgen Habermas's attempt to lay a communication-theoretic foundation for critical theory. He resolutely draws his conclusions from the reduction of the concept of work which, following the experience of the rationalization of labor processes, has molded the conceptual structure of twentieth-century social philosophy. Habermas accepts the Aristotelian distinction between 'praxis' and 'poiesis', which Hannah Arendt has revived, in order to allow intersubjective understanding as a type of action to achieve the status in the theory of emancipation which social labor had possessed in Marxist theory. This paradigm shift leaves its mark upon the entire architectonic of Habermas's theory, 48 but at the cost, finally, of categorically eliminating those forms of resistance and emancipation which are rooted in the structure of the capitalist work process itself.

### III

The historical basis upon which Marx supposes that there is a connection between social emancipation and social labor has changed so much since the nineteenth century that practically none of the critical social theories of this century continues to place any confidence in the liberating, consciousness building potential of the social labor process. This social change in concrete forms of work has had a similarly destructive effect upon the concept of work. In his concept of work, Marx retained the categorical tension between alienated and unalienated work activity between integrated organic craft work and atomized, mechanical fragments of activity while not possessing the conceptual means to describe the mediating process of reflection itself. This tension has gradually been resolved in favor of a one-sided concept which merely reflects the actual relations of social labor. In the course of this complex theoretical development, the concept of work has lost the critical aspect of its meaning, its significance for the potential transcendence of established forms of work in society. The categories of 'alienated' or 'abstract' work, with which Marx criticizes the capitalist organization of work activity, have practically disappeared from the theoretical language of Marxist-oriented social philosophy because there seems to be no criterion of appropriately human, that is, unalien-



ated work which is independent of the norms of a particular culture. In the same way, the actual claims and ideas about work held by the subjects who are engaged in social production according to the rules set by a factory leadership trained in scientific management have lost all significance for modern theories of society. They have been handed over to the empirical methods of industrial research under the rubric of 'occupational aspirations' and no longer play a decisive role in the critical diagnosis of the major conflicts in the contemporary social system. Examples of this thematic displacement within the framework of critical social theory are offered today by the approach in the interpretation of Marx's analysis of capital known as 'conceptual realism' 49 as well as by certain efforts directed toward a transformation of historical materialism under the guiding theme of 'appropriation' [*Aneignung*].50

In the context of these theoretical developments, Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism has a particularly important place. Here, the traditional Marxist model of action, based exclusively upon human work upon nature, is extended to include the processes of intersubjective understanding. But the progress represented by this 'intersubjective turn' in critical social theory is paid for by the disappearance of the conflict potential still available in social labor from the theory of action.

The basic theme of Habermas's social theory is rooted in the same contemporary experience to which the theory of action in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* also responds.<sup>51</sup> The levelling out of the distinction between technological progress and social emancipation, which is typical of late capitalist societies; the impoverishment of living social communication and its replacement by organized systems of rational-purposive action these developments are so central and so dangerous for contemporary society that Habermas concentrates his reconstruction of historical materialism upon their interpretation. This task is aided by the distinction between work and interaction: more precisely, between instrumental and communicative action.<sup>52</sup> Before Habermas applies this distinction in his critique of Marx, he develops it in epistemological works which are intended to prepare the way for a pragmatic critique of positivism which itself deviates from the traditional critique of ideology characteristic of critical theory.<sup>53</sup> Unlike Adorno, who in turn agrees with Sohn-Rethal, Habermas does not connect the positivist concept of science with the compulsion toward abstraction characteristic of commodity exchange. Instead, he traces it to operations of thought which are bound up with the manipulative intervention into nature itself. The rules for the execution of instrumental acts, which represent for Habermas the culturally invariant basis of so-



cial production, play the same role in his pragmatic theory of knowledge as do the rules of abstraction, which are generalized in capitalist exchange, in Sohn-Rethal's sociogenetic theory of knowledge. Thus, in the perspective of Habermas's argument, the scientific mode of thinking only fixes operations of thought which are already laid out prescientifically in the act of controlling nature. According to this model, positivism first lays itself open to criticism when it is extended to social reality. It is positivism's pretension to universality which is epistemologically false, not the rules of knowledge formulated in its theory of science.

Although these considerations were originally intended only to establish the basis for a critique of positivism, they also pushed Habermas to locate the human sciences epistemologically. For if the construction of theory in the natural sciences is rooted in the species-historical process of the appropriation of nature, then the process of theory construction in the human sciences must also be rooted in a process of prescientific experience through which the species reproduces itself in practice. In this way Habermas traces the Marxist distinction between productive forces and relations of production to the distinction between 'instrumental' and 'communicative' forms of action, 54 in order to justify pragmatically the differences between theory construction in the natural and the human sciences by tracing them to the twofold structure of the process of social reproduction. Just as the natural sciences follow the knowledge-constitutive human interest in the control of nature, so are the human sciences led by the interest in the preservation and extension of intersubjective understanding, which with the linguistification [*Versprachlichung*] of the human life form has become a species-specific imperative for survival.<sup>55</sup> The mutually irreducible rules of action, which are thought to guide instrumental work upon nature, on the one hand, and communicative understanding among subjects, on the other, determine the two zones of prescientific experience to which Habermas, with the aim of developing a transcendental pragmatism, links the natural and the human sciences respectively. At the same time, this distinction opens up the epistemological route along which he attempts to re-establish the methodological structure of historical materialism. This epistemological point of departure defines the basis upon which Habermas first presents the determinants of his theory of action. Here he is primarily interested in the cognitive achievements which are systematically woven into the execution of instrumental and communicative acts. He develops the concepts of action which he requires to address this issue at a categorical level bounded on one side by Arnold Gehlen's anthropological theory of action and on the other by the social behaviourist theory of the followers of George Herbert Mead. In the latter tra-

dition, the subject area of the social sciences is understood as the process of structuring reality which is carried out directly or indirectly by socialized subjects in common acts. In their mutually related actions, the members of a society interpret their action situation and thus produce the social reality which then becomes the object of sociological discourse. The special theoretical status of this discipline, then, is the result of the specific character of its object, which is already pre-structured by the interpretations of the actors. Habermas accepts this fundamental supposition of Mead's theoretical approach. 56 He views social action as a process of communication in which at least two subjects bring their goal-directed activities into line with one another by means of a symbolically conveyed agreement upon a common definition of their situation. This process of symbolically mediated interaction constantly requires interpretive performances from the participating actors, in which they must reciprocally reveal the intended goals of their actions to one another in order to achieve mutual understanding. Habermas pursues this model of action further along the route taken by philosophers of language who practice the reconstruction of communicative speech acts. In this form, the model determines the categorical structure of his social theory. He conceives the total spectrum of modes of social praxis from the standpoint of this type of action. All social acts not oriented toward mutual understanding thus become practical deviations from it. For Habermas, the model of communicative action is intended to cover as much of the total field of social activity as possible. In a certain sense, then, the number of interpersonal processes which cannot be grasped within it indicates the degree of reification in a societythe extent to which the context of social life is simply reproduced along predetermined sociocultural lines, instead of being coordinated by actions aimed at mutual understanding. In this way the concept of communicative action becomes, both normatively and empirically, the key concept in Habermas's interpretation of historical materialism assuming in a sense the same position which the concept of work holds in Marxist theory. On the one hand, the concept helps to clarify the empirical process whereby social complexes can alone achieve cultural reproduction and social integration by allowing, at least in certain sectors of social action, processes of communicative action. At the same time, the communicative model of action provides an analytical standard according to which the degree of freedom possessed by specific social structures can be evaluated by measuring the communicative content of their forms of interaction.57

The importance for the theory of emancipation which the concept of communicative action gains in Habermas's social theory, however,

leads to a corresponding decrease in the importance of the concept of work. 58 In the categorical structure of this theory, work merely designates the action substratethe development of social forces of productionfrom which the processes of communicative liberation are then normatively distinguished. Because they are intended to produce modes of understanding which are free of domination, Habermas distinguishes the potential moral-practical rationality of communicative acts from the potential for technical rationality bound up with manipulative interventions into nature. Social structures secure their economic survival only by means of the systemic exploitation of the instrumental knowledge which working subjects construct with the goal of achieving domination over nature. With this analytical separation of the process of socio-cultural development into two dimensions of rationalization, Habermas frees critical social theory from the theoretical confusion caused by Marx's obscuring of the boundaries between technological progress and social liberation:

While instrumental action corresponds to the constraint of external nature and the level of the forces of production determines the extent of technical control over natural forces, communicative action stands in correspondence to the suppression of man's own nature. The institutional framework determines the extent of repression by the unreflected, 'natural' force of social dependence and political power, which is rooted in prior history and tradition. A society owes emancipation from the external forces of nature to labor processes, that is to the production of technically exploitable knowledge (including the transformation of the natural sciences into machinery). Emancipation from the compulsion of internal nature succeeds to the degree that institutions based on force are replaced by an organization of social relations that is bound only to communication free from domination. This does not occur directly through productive activity, but rather through the revolutionary activity of struggling classes (including the critical activity of reflective sciences). Taken together, both categories of social practice make possible what Marx, interpreting Hegel, calls the self-generative act of the species.<sup>59</sup>

The process of practical revolutionary change, the liberation of a society from a repressive form of organization, is thus based upon practical and moral knowledge which is built up from the experience of systematically distorted structures of interaction. The normative learning process, in which the actors cooperatively bring to consciousness that

goal of mutual understanding which is immanent in socially organized communicative action, thus produces the moral insights which may lead to liberation from social domination. Habermas completely dissolves the categorical connection which Marx attempts to establish between social labor and social liberation. For the former, the self-development of revolutionary social consciousness follows a logic of action fundamentally different from that of socially organized work upon nature.

Habermas is no longer faced with the difficulties into which a Marxist-oriented social philosophy runs, so long as it insists on retaining an immanent philosophical-historical connection between work and emancipation, and even despite its mistrust of the emancipatory potential of actual work relations. The distinction between work and interaction renders Habermas's social theory immune to those instrumental interpretations of revolutionary processes of social learning which are built on the narrow conceptual base of the action model of labor. At the same time, however, the concept of work occupies such a marginal position in it that the practical morality embedded in instrumental action, on the basis of which working subjects could react to their experience of the impoverishment of instrumental work activity under capital, is completely excluded from its conceptual framework.

Habermas accepts the concept of work at the level formulated in Arnold Gehlen's anthropological theory of action. Gehlen's basic idea, as expressed in his major work *Der Mensch*, 60 is that the system of drives, the chronically overstimulated perceptual system and the essentially shapeless motor system with which humans are physically equipped force them to engage in goal-oriented activity which shapes their needs, structures their perception and directs their motor apparatus. Through action humans relieve themselves of the risks to survival that are a consequence of the organic constitution of an incomplete being. For Gehlen, then, action is the unifying principle of the organization of human life. But he depicts the structure of action as a solipsistic system of relations in which action itself is imagined as being in principle the isolated tinkering of a subject with and upon things.<sup>61</sup> Instrumental action is the medium within which a system consisting of drives, perception and a motor apparatus, which is always threatening to get out of control, reorganizes itself. Habermas makes use of this system of anthropological concepts to complete his theory of action with a definition of activities directed toward physical objects. The concept of communicative action traces forms of social interaction to an anthropologically rooted structure of rules. For types of activity which are directed to an object, the concept of instrumental action performs the same function. In instrumental action, the subject tests her activity according to the suc-

cess with which she can manipulate things to achieve a previously determined purpose. Here the act of work is dependent upon the knowledge of the technical rules which is gained in empirical trial-and-error tinkering with physical objects. 62 In socially organized work processes, these instrumental acts are then coordinated among the individual working subjects according to rules of cooperation developed in the interest of the common goal of reproduction.<sup>63</sup>

At the more highly developed theoretical level at which Habermas is working, the concept of instrumental action obviously preserves the economic and anthropological dimension of meaning which Marx invested in his concept of work. Habermas, like Marx, comprehends work in terms of the organic insufficiency of a species which is thus forced to reproduce itself economically by means of instrumental action. Habermas eliminates from his concept of work, however, that theoretical dimension on the basis of which Marx in his early, Hegelian writings interprets the act of work as a process objectifying human capabilities. For this lost dimension of meaning Habermas provides no correlate. The externalization model of work, which is, after all, the normative basis of Marx's critique of alienated labor in the Paris manuscripts, is carried over during his theoretical move to political-economy in the form of the empirically informed idea of craftsmanlike work activity, in which the actor autonomously and with great skill makes concrete his self-acquired empirical knowledge in the course of working upon an object. Marx then contrasts this holistic act of work positively with the extreme case under capitalism of an abstract work activity which has been emptied of all meaning. Such a differentiation among types of work activity is not to be found in Habermas. To be sure, the concept of instrumental action is also based upon the notion of a kind of activity in which the working subject independently controls and regulates her relations with the object of her work, but Habermas does not make systematic use of this conceptual implication. He ranks the spectrum of interpersonal activities according to the degree to which they have taken the form of an uncoerced act of mutual understanding, but he differentiates the historical range of work forms only according to their type of social organization, not according to the degree to which they fulfill the conditions of an undistorted act of work.<sup>64</sup> However, at the latest stage, with the establishment of work systems realizing Taylor's ideals, the rationalization of work and of production technology, driven by the pressure of capitalist accumulation, reached a threshold at which the greater part of industrial work activity lost the character of being complete in itself. The fragmented instrumental operations into which social labor has been reduced by the process of rationalization has to

such an extent been separated from the autonomous control and empirical knowledge of working subjects that they actually no longer can comprehend the entire structure of a work procedure. Habermas has given up the categorical means for analytically grasping this systematic dissociation of all work content from instrumental modes of action. He applies the concept of instrumental action in the tradition of those recent social-philosophical conceptions which have so completely neutralized the normative concept of work, that they can subsume under it uncritically every form of activity which has anything to do with the handling of an object.

A critical concept of work must grasp categorically the difference between an instrumental act in which the working subject structures and regulates his own activity on his own initiative, according to his own knowledge, in a self-contained process, and an instrumental act in which neither the accompanying controls nor the object-related structuring of the activity is left to the initiative of the working subject. 65 Marx had obviously intended to preserve this distinction in the range of meaning which he assigned to his concept of work throughout his life, although he did not make full use of the concept to develop a theory of emancipation. Habermas restricts himself here to a concept of instrumental action which can be applied, without distinction, to any manipulative relation to an object.

This levelling out of the distinctions between empirically different forms of work in the concept of instrumental action is significant because it relates to an important distinction within Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism. Habermas, after all, uses the epistemologically developed distinction between instrumental and communicative action in order to make a normative distinction in the realm of evolutionary theory between the development of emancipatory consciousness and the mere expansion of technical knowledge. In the structures of symbolically mediated interaction, moral knowledge is constructed from the actors' intuitive communicative achievements, which in turn gradually bring to consciousness goals of mutual understanding which are basically contrary to those of the accepted structures of social action. In the action structures of social labor, on the other hand, the symbolically generalized results from the manipulation of natural objects are built up into technical knowledge which increases control over external nature. This distinction is the foundation of Habermas's conception of historical materialism.<sup>66</sup> However, if Habermas had differentiated the category of instrumental action internally as much as he differentiates the spectrum of social action normatively, then he would have been required to recognize the existence of a type of moral-

practical knowledge which is based not upon the consciousness of systematically distorted relations of communication, but upon the experience of the destruction of true acts of work in the course of the rationalization of production techniques. That consciousness of social injustice which builds upon the systematic expropriation of one's own work activity, <sup>67</sup> however, is completely overlooked by Habermas's categories. For when the argument is first admitted that only those instrumental acts may be called acts of work which the actor herself independently shapes and directs, then the possibility emerges of a process of intellectual self-development in which working subjects can systematically maintain their right to the control of the work process, that is, to the work character of their instrumental acts.

The process of emancipatory reflection, which Habermas supposes to take place in acts of communication, breaks radically through interactive relations which have been distorted by a given social structure, in order to recover the goal of mutual understanding immanent in such relations from the society's repressive form of organization. If the argument has been correct up to this point, then there would correspond to this reflective process a morally oriented process of action in the region of social labor which would reclaim the meaningful work content of instrumental action from out of the social forms established through domination. The valid normative claim which thus comes to expression results from a moral vulnerability which grows not from the suppression of communicative modes of mutual understanding, but from the expropriation of the workers' own work activity. The moral knowledge which is constructed on the basis of such experiences is embodied in acts of work which claim their autonomy even in the organizational reality of externally determined forms of work. But this inner logic corresponds neither to the logic of acts of communication aimed at the coordination of intentional actions via mutual understanding, nor to the logic of instrumental actions aimed at the technical domination of natural processes. Without thereby committing myself to systematic claims, I would like to make provisional use of the concept of 'appropriation', which has been utilized in French sociology, in order to characterize the logic of this type of action, which while bound up with instrumental action processes nonetheless extends beyond them.

In an essay entitled 'La resistance ouvrière á la rationalisation: la reappropriation du travail,'<sup>68</sup> Phillipe Bernoux describes an empirical study, carried out by means of participant observation, standardized questionnaires and open interviews, which studied the significance of a variety of everyday work practices in which workers in an industrial concern systematically violate and subvert the rules of production that



were determined by management and embodied in the technical organization of work. The study distinguished four types of such violations, which while having a practical impact did not interrupt the work process: an opposing organization of time by which workers themselves determined as far as possible the rhythm of work; symbolic demonstrations in which individuals and groups take possession of work spaces; 69 techniques used in the work process developed at the workers' own initiative; and, lastly, surreptitious and cooperative reorganization of factory technology.<sup>70</sup> In all four dimensions workers obviously bring a comprehensive work competence to bear which in each particular situation is superior to the scientific knowledge of management.<sup>71</sup>

Bernoux interprets this spectrum of oppositional practices which have been woven into the work process as a cooperative effort by workers to recover control over their own work activity: "Our hypothesis holds that one of the most important dimensions of past and present conflicts emerges from the dimension of appropriation. Each of these conflicts expresses a will to organize and control production, to define itself as an autonomous group standing in opposition to the organization, to make itself recognized as having rights as an essential moment of production."<sup>72</sup> In the broad front of instrumentally oriented action sequences which seek to bring an externally determined work process back within the horizon of an autonomously planned and controlled work activity, working subjects press a claim which is immanent to their activity. The moral knowledge, therefore, which is systematically embodied in these practical violations of work regulations does not aim at freeing workers from barriers to communicative action but rather at their emancipation from obstructions in instrumental action.

The appropriative practices [*Aneignungspraxis*] which these investigations in industrial sociology bring to light<sup>73</sup> apparently have entered so inconspicuously into the everyday life of the capitalist work process that they have largely remained below the threshold of expression which must first be crossed before sociology will register them at all as conflicts in social action and as normative violations. For that reason, such zones of practical resistance tend thus far to have been documented in literature rather than in empirical social research.<sup>74</sup> If, however, the experiences vouched for therein and the conclusions reached in Bernoux's study do not fully deceive, then the meaningless industrial work achieved through rationalization according to Taylor's principles is away accompanied by an opposing action process in which working subjects cooperatively seek to reclaim control over their own activity. Thus, oddly enough, a moment of practical recollection would then seem to dwell within the unjustified dominion of alienated labor.



The categorical framework which Habermas proposes for his reconstruction of historical materialism is hardly adequate to grasp the type of moral knowledge which is applied in this form of "practical criticism." In the version employed by Habermas, the concept of instrumental action itself is thematically too thin to be able to grasp the moral tension inherent in established work relations. Establishing historical materialism upon the foundation of a theory of communication has at least the advantage of directing attention to the structures of an evolutionary process of communicative liberation which is no longer attributable to a specific class. But its conceptual weakness, as I see it, is that its basic concepts are laid out from the beginning as though the process of liberation from alienated work relations, which Marx had in mind, were already historically complete.

# Chapter 3

## A Fragmented World:

### On the Implicit Relevance of Lukács' Early Work

Lukács' early philosophical work is relevant today only in an indirect sense: it is not the theoretical arguments and diagnoses that it offers but rather the substantive problems alone to which it turns its attention which are of interest for the contemporary discussion. In those early writings composed prior to his turn to Marxism, Lukács comported himself toward the philosophical currents of his time in what is best described as an experimental fashion: from each of the different approaches that were of significance among the intellectual discussions around the turn of the century Lukács adopted a part so as to gauge what they might be able to contribute to the solution of the problem that was for him of actual existential concern. Though the methods of philosophical reflection which he in this way utilized may be obsolete today, the problems themselves which he sought with their help to resolve continue, by contrast, to possess an implicit relevance. Since his youth it has been the question concerning the cultural conditions of an undistorted and successful process of socialization that has motivated Lukács. He regards the social situation of his time as one characterized by the condition of social alienation, the emergence of which he traces back to a cultural crisis. 1 What distinguishes his early writings even to-

day is the radicality and acuity with which he sought to determine the causes of this cultural crisis. The normative intuitions that guide him on his way have as their source the romantic anticapitalism to which he uncritically committed himself in his early years. In what follows I want to show that it is precisely this romantic anticapitalism that is able to lend an implicit relevance to Lukács early works today: due to its influence his theoretical attentiveness to disturbances of cultural integration is seen to be heightened and his awareness of social pathologies sharpened. I shall proceed, first, by briefly outlining the fundamental experiences and leading ideas of romantic anticapitalism (I) in order, secondly, to be able to illustrate the specific interpretive contours which this intellectual tradition assumed in Lukács' early writings (II). In concluding I shall illustrate the problem-disclosing function that his approach is able to assume in the field of social theory today.

## I

In a moment of self-critical reflection Lukács himself described the writings of his youth above all, though, the *Theory of the Novel* as the product of a 'romantic anticapitalism'.<sup>2</sup> With this concept he sought to characterize the intellectual orientation that his writing shared with other contemporaries. By this is meant not so much a unified tradition of thought, but rather more an intellectual mood and experiential situation. Though nourished as such by the theories and motives of romanticism, romantic anticapitalism appropriates them in a situation specific manner. The latter shares with the former the fundamental experience of the social fragmentation particular to modern industrialized forms of life. Both also share as a normative touchstone those modes of life and forms of action which have left in a state of organic unity those things which processes of modern social differentiation have divided. The thematic consciousness of romantic anticapitalism is in this respect marked, on the one hand, by the concept of 'fragmentation' [*Zerrissenheit*] and, on the other, by that of 'organic unity'.<sup>3</sup> From among the various streams of thought brought forth by Romanticism, anticapitalism is the one which locates the causes of the experience of fragmentation in the processes of capitalist modernization and which at the same time thinks of the conditions for overcoming this fragmentation as a practical task for the future. The spectrum of this romantic anticapitalism, as the research of Michael Löwy plausibly suggests,<sup>4</sup> reaches from a jacobean-democratic romanticism through underground populist and anarchist currents up to a marxist romanticism. In all of these positions

three dimensions can be distinguished, I believe, in which the specifically capitalist organization of social life is experienced as fragmented and on the basis of which the ideal of a regenerated unity in processes of social life can be outlined. These three levels in the experience of social fragmentation can be distinguished as the dimensions of (a) an individual's relation to him- or herself, (b) social relations, that is, the organization of social life, and, finally, (c) the relation to nature, that is, the relation of humans to the natural world around them.

- (a) With regard to the individual's relation to him- or herself the capitalist form of social organization is experienced as a condition of fragmentation because the possibility of appropriating one's own powers and capacities by means of their gradual externalization is socially constrained and to a certain extent extinguished. The human relation-to-self is rent because it can no longer become cognizant of its potentialities by way of their integral externalization in work. The philosophical background to this account of this experience is constituted by Expressivism, by which German Idealism since Herder has been informed. The authentic power [*eigentliche Vermögen*] of the human being is regarded by this tradition as being the capacity for the creative expression [*gestaltenden Ausdruck*] of her own needs and feelings. 5 Similar to some attempts already in the early romantic period,<sup>6</sup> the original expressivistic motive was in Marx's concept of work developed further into an ideal of aesthetic production in which artistic work is taken to be the model for the organization of all forms of activity.<sup>7</sup> Finally, in England, this expressivistic motive is yet once again radicalized in the writings of John Ruskin and William Morris in that it is made into the foundation of a utopian model of society. A work process which is self-enclosed and overseeable by the independent worker himself is in this case made into the elementary unit of a social organization constructed according to the model of a craftperson's workshop.<sup>8</sup> In the end the conditions for successful socialization are made so radically dependent upon the presuppositions of successful aesthetic production that the critical social motive threatens to fade into a purely aesthetic utopia.<sup>9</sup>
- (b) With regard to human social relations the capitalist mode of social organization is experienced as a state of fragmentation because along with the pluralization of action-guiding values the possibility of collective identity formation has also been undermined. Human social relations are fragmented because the necessary bonds are now merely cognitively generated and no longer emotionally experienced. Rather than being supported by active participation and affective consent, social institutions meet with nothing but indifference. In opposition to this the romantic community ideal represents the image of a society in

which the integrating norms and action orientations consist no longer merely of rational obligations but rather of emotionally laden and collectively reproduced conventions the "institutionalized obligations should become the imperatives of all souls". Artistic activity which permeates society is regarded as the medium of such collective reproduction of common values: this thought, descending from the romantic period, contains from the very beginning, however, a fundamental tension between the ideas of restoring cultic pre-urban communities and of a democratic public integrated through the medium of art. 10 The place that romantic anticapitalist thought occupies along the political spectrum is always to be established according to which of these two alternatives serves to establish the model of a culturally integrated society.

- (c) With regard to the relation of humans to nature the capitalist mode of social organization is experienced as a condition of fragmentation because it generalizes the cultural framework of instrumental disposal over inner as well as outer nature to such an extent that the organic connectedness of humans and nature threatens to pass into oblivion. The relation of humans to nature is fragmented, that is, because external nature is given just as little as bodily impulses the scope that is necessary for an undistorted reproduction within the natural environment. In opposition to this the left-romantic ideal of a reconciliation with nature, which is nourished by currents of Judaic mysticism and which found expression in the work of Bloch and Adorno, proposes the image of a society in which natural life processes are freed from the compulsion of a totalizing drive toward instrumental control and in which nature thus becomes a dialogical counterpart for humans.<sup>11</sup> As speculative and eccentric as this thought indeed sounds, to this day there has been no end to life-philosophical and phenomenological attempts to show that our objective understanding of nature is embedded in the implicit framework of a dialogical-empathetic knowledge of natural processes.<sup>12</sup>

These experiences of fragmentation in each of the three specific dimensions of human life permeate the world-view and mood [*Stimmungslage*] of romantic anticapitalism. Its theoretical approach to historical development is established on the basis of these experiences, and they guide the vision of the future to be created.

## II

The fundamental experience of the young Lukács is also that of the social fragmentation of human life processes. To be sure, his early work

is in itself disunified and marked by profound contradictions: the writings that he composed between 1907 and 1918 are characterized by theoretical tensions between life-philosophical and neo-Kantian directions as well as by methodological ambivalences between a metaphysical-existential philosophical approach and historical-sociological modes of procedure. 13 It is the romantically sharpened experience of the fragmentation marking the industrial world, however, that connects the writings of that period and allows them to be brought together at all as a unified complex in the history of his work. The philosophical-historical diagnosis of a rupture that splits the modern individual internally and destroys its relation to all other subjects forms the common background to both the *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*<sup>14</sup> and the collection of essays *Soul and Form*<sup>15</sup> as well as finally the *Theory of the Novel*. Lukács regards the processes of differentiation which prepare the way for industrial capitalism with a heightened sensitivity for those conditions which are fulfilled within the romantic vision of fully integrated life-processes: the capitalist rationalization of work activity represents for him a destruction of possibilities for individual expression, and he experiences the accompanying intensification in the division of labor as a collapse of the society into atomized and isolated subjects. He supposes that the result of the first process is the inner division of the individual into an alienated external world and a disconnected inwardness, into social duty and individual inclination. He sees as the result of the second process the erosion of collectively held beliefs and with that a loss of those cultural conventions [*Gemeinsamkeiten*] which had up until that point allowed the communicative exchange of social experience to take place unproblematically.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the young Lukács leaves mostly unexplored the third fundamental experience of romantic anticapitalism, the perception of a disrupted relation of humans to the natural world surrounding them.

Now Lukács did not simply register these formative experiences of his like a sociologist, but rather sought at the same time to integrate them into a philosophical framework. The experimental attitude which he adopted toward the philosophy of his time hindered, to be sure, the development of a unified project, but not his formulation of a comprehensive basic conception. This conception, which, despite their differences, forms the basics of all his writings from this period, has its origins in life-philosophy. One passage in the *Theory of the Novel* condenses it into a single splendid train of thought. In anticipation of his later development, Lukács speaks there of the social reality of capitalist modernity in terms of a reality that has petrified into a second nature: "This

second nature is not dumb, sensuous and yet senseless like the first: it is a complex of sensesmeaningswhich has become rigid and strange, and which no longer awakens interiority; it is a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities; . . . When the structures made by man for man are really adequate to man, they are his necessary and native home; and he does not know the nostalgia that posits and experiences nature as the object of its own seeking and finding. . . . When the soul-content of these constructs can no longer directly become the matter at hand, when the constructs no longer appear as the agglomerate and concentrate of interiorities which can at any moment be transformed back into a soul, then they must, in order to subsist, achieve a power which dominates men blindly, without exception or choice." 17

A diagnosis of the times and a utopian vision are here unified. A model of externalization, owing less to Hegel than to Simmel, as is shown by the selection of categories and the use of metaphor, represents their common background.<sup>18</sup>

Within this life-philosophically informed model, which forms the theoretical point of reference for all of Lukács earlier writings, the successful development of an individual's personality is conceived according to the same pattern as the successful realization of a community. The individual and the community can both develop only by way of the externalization [*Entäußerung*] of spiritual drives and motives in the form of cultural creations, that is to say, as institutions and forms of life. These latter, in turn, must remain so transparent and closely bound up with motives that the individual and the community can at any time recognize themselves in these institutions and forms of life and consequently can return to themselves. The path of a continuous embodiment and reappropriation of individual and collective feelings in cultural forms of expression forms the process through which an individual or community can ideally achieve an authentic life.

Lukács does not in all of his earlier writings suppose that this path to an authentic personality or community formation represents an existential possibility for humans in general; often enough a tragic perspective prevails in which it appears to belong to the anthropological situation of human beings precisely not to be able to realize one's spiritual drives and feelings.<sup>19</sup> In either case, however, this life-philosophical model of externalization provides the background for the philosophical interpretation of the sociologically registered fragmentation of the modern world. According to this model, therefore, the individual in industrial capitalism is fragmented because the industrialized form of work no longer offers her the possibility of an individual self-realization in

which she would be a subject able to unfold all of her capacities. And according to his model society is thus fragmented within modern capitalism because with the increasing division of labor and the destruction of unified world views social institutions can no longer be an expression of collectively felt conviction and values. In opposition to this condition of social fragmentation the young Lukács, wherever he manages to overcome his tragic world view, places the ideal of an aesthetic culture. We find this ideal encoded in the description of the artistic German craftperson [*Handwerkerkünstler*] found in the essay in *Soul and Form* dedicated to the work of Theodor Storm and Gottfried Keller, though it is more openly and pointedly articulated in the preliminary sketches for the work on Dostoyevsky, in which the Russian village community is treated as the model of successful social integration. 20

What is distinctive about this positive reference is that it follows from Lukács conviction that the conditions for a successful self-realization of the individual are connected with the possibility of successful community formation: an individual is only reconciled with himself when he is able in the context of a community setting to bring his capacities to cultural expression, just as, the other way around, a community is reconciled with itself only when the individual is able affectively to find himself in its institutions. Personal self-realization and community formation are, in the social-utopian models that Lukács sketches, not only each an end in itself but, further, are as ends also necessarily internally coupled. The connection that he thereby produces between two separate complexes of ideas out of the tradition of social romanticism arises from a basic thought which comes to expression above all in the essay concerning the artistic craftperson. The chance for individual self-realization exists at all, namely, only to the extent that there are collectively shared means of expression that can serve the individual as a medium of expressive and publicly displayed [*veranschaulichend*] objectification of her impulses. The possibility of successful community formation, on the other hand, arises only to the extent that public and communal institutions are developed in which subjects can find and, therefore, realize themselves. Personal self-realization and community formation are therefore as goals internally connected.<sup>21</sup>

Now it is the collective utilization of aesthetic symbols that the young Lukács regards as the facilitating medium of such a successful social integration, here again lead by Romantic themes. Only on this basis is it at all comprehensible why he supposes that the necessary condition for undistorted socialization is the existence of an 'aesthetic culture'. From the communicatively shared use of artistic symbols arises a means of expression that is equally a medium of individual self-realization and of collective identity formation. In this respect the aesthetic culture rep-



resents a concrete totality in the sense of a successful mediation of the individual and the collective. 22 Like Ernst Bloch, with whom he was at that time befriended, Lukács did not hesitate to use the concept of 'Heimat' to designate this kind of aesthetically self-reconciled society.<sup>23</sup>

With his idea of an aesthetic culture Lukács expands his concept of public freedom with an expressive dimension. Though this is already clear in the utopian anticipations contained in some parts of his early writings, it is first definitely articulated in the essay about 'Old and New Culture' that he composed in 1920, after the overthrow of the Hungarian council republic.<sup>24</sup> Here he again takes up the guiding normative idea of an aesthetic culture and interprets it anew within the framework of a model of externalization that now, however, is more strongly marked by the Marxist paradigm of production than by Simmel's concept of life. "Culture is only possible," as it says in the essay, "when from the perspective of the relation between the product and its maker the creation of the product is experienced by the producer as a unified and self-enclosed process; a process, moreover, whose coherence depends upon the human possibilities and capacities of the creator. The characteristic example of such a process is the work of art, wherein the entire development of the work is exclusively the result of the artist's work and every single detail of the existing work is determined by the artist's individual qualities."<sup>25</sup> This ideal of aesthetic production proposes the normative conception of successful socialization in which "the products of culture can develop organically out of the soil of the social being."<sup>26</sup> Lukács believes, then, that capitalism, because it revolutionized production for the sake of the profit motive, has established a "domination of the economy over the totality of life"; the capitalist economic organization thereby ruptures the organic bond that once had existed between the subject's productive expressions of life and cultural creations, namely, in Greece and during the Renaissance. Thus it is only a socialist revolution, which would once again subordinate the process of production to the framework of the public life, that can restore the conditions for an 'organic' culture. Under the conditions of communism, since in principle all subjects obtain the possibility of free individual action [*Selbstbetätigung*], the public culture would assume the character of an aesthetic-expressive medium in which the community group would be conscious of its own freedom.

The basic ideas and terminology of the essay show how strongly Lukács himself was still shaped in 1920 by the social romantic world of ideas in his early writings. There stands at the center of the idea of communism that he developed at that time the thought still of an aesthetic culture in which individual self-realization and collective identity for-

mation are internally connected. But what do these ideas of the young Lukács, his diagnosis of an internally fragmented world and the therapy of an aesthetic recovery of collective identity, still have to say today?

### III

The methods of philosophical thinking used by the young Lukács have in the meantime become theoretically outdated. The life-philosophically oriented model of externalization, which forms the conceptual framework on which his diagnosis of the world of capitalist modernity is based, had lost all persuasive power. 27 Neither the process of personality formation nor the emergence and development of societies can today still plausibly be treated as processes that occur according to the pattern of the continuous externalization and reappropriation of psychic drives. The formative process of a subject does not, as suggested by the externalization model, take place as an isolated process of the gradual objectification of motivating drives, but rather takes place as a process of intersubjective socialization in which the subject first learns by means of gradual boundary formation to maintain its own unique needs and feelings. Just as little can social development be understood as a process of externalization writ large, as the objectification of collective states of feeling and value concepts, as it would appear from the perspective of life-philosophy. The process of social constitution can also only be analyzed as a communicative process in which social groups create and reproduce social institutions on the conflict-ridden path of interaction.<sup>28</sup> The community ideal, moreover, that the young Lukács had in mind as a solution for the fragmented condition of capitalist modernity strikes us today as hopelessly outdated. The differentiation of the spheres of culture and society, that has lead on the one hand to the separation of economy, state and family, and on the other to the institutional specification [*Aussonderung*] of art, science and law, has progressed to such a degree that a critical comparison with premodern-agrarian or early bourgeois forms of society cannot be made without any further ado.

Taking these objections and reservations together, the relevance of Lukács early work cannot be thought to lie in the social-theoretical approach itself. To the contrary, its implicit relevance shows itself if it is no longer taken as a paradigmatic theoretical core, but rather as a seismographic aid for a critical social theory. Then it turns out that Lukács romantic anticapitalism can act in the capacity of a sensor that is able diagnostically to indicate disturbances in an era's patterns of cultural integration.

In the tradition leading back to Marx, the young Lukács is the one who allowed himself in his diagnosis of the capitalist world to be most strongly and nakedly lead by social-romantic motives. This he thought through consistently to the concluding point of positing an ineradicable connection between individual self-realization and community formation. He thereby expanded the idea of progress beyond the concept of social justice and universal freedom out to the notion of successful socialization. This idea directs a light upon the process of capitalist modernization that is sharp enough to throw into relief the resulting burdens and experiences of suffering that, without such a source of illumination, would not be recognized at all. Processes of social differentiation, that is, that tear an integrated social life asunder and replace it with isolated and autonomous spheres of action take place silently and anonymously. To be able to make the social suffering and individual pain caused by these processes accessible to theoretical reflection at all, it requires the normative anticipation of a pattern of undistorted and successful socialization. Only in the light of such 'strong evaluations', as Charles Taylor calls the theoretically irreducible vision of a fortunate life, 29 does social suffering emerge as suffering. The writings composed by Lukács in his youth are place holders for valuations of this kind. They can be summarized in the idea of an aesthetic culture. This idea reminds us of the cultural prerequisites for an undistorted process of socialization, injuring which would rob social progress of the dimension of happiness. There thus can come into view the injuries and destruction inhering in capitalist modernization of which many contemporary social theories too often have already lost the ability to take note. Are the conditions of individual self-realization perhaps in fact coupled to the prerequisite of a individually enacted instantiation of personal capacities in such a way that the extensive destruction of meaningful work activities also always destroys the social chances for self-realization? Are the conditions for the formation of society also not actually bound to the precondition of an affectively experienced and publicly displayed collective identity in such a way that institutional forms which have been disconnected from the subject's emotional experience also always exclude the possibility of a successful process of socialization? Finally, is not a democratized culture bound to the requirement of equal rights for all members of society to participate in aesthetic creation [*ästhetische Bildung*] in such a way that the extreme specialization and social marginalization of art today will significantly impoverish a society's means of symbolic expression?

Admittedly, such diagnoses of social pathologies, for which we can claim only intuitive valuations rather than conclusive grounds, must approach something in social reality so that it is not merely fic-

tional scenarios which result. Only when an inquiry which is guided by such a diagnostic interpretation of an era also is able to show empirically that the capitalist injury to those theoretically postulated prerequisites for an undistorted process of socialization in fact leads to social disruptions and individual suffering do these valuations and interpretations lose their merely subjective character. Whether the intuitive vision of a successful process of socialization takes on a reality disclosing power at all can be demonstrated solely in reference to undesirable developmental processes in social life itself. In this respect, Lukács' early work, taken as a seismographical organ for a critical theory of society, points toward its continuation through empirical social research.

## Chapter 4

### Critical Theory 1

It is now half a century since critical theory emerged under the direction of a single man and as the work of a circle of intellectuals; but it was not until the student movement turned back to the writings of the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*) that critical theory was recognized as a unified theoretical project. Since then it has occupied the intellectual imagination: historical research has retraced the history of that intellectual circle around Horkheimer from its beginnings in Frankfurt to its spread, via France, to the United States;<sup>2</sup> spurred on by the disillusioning accounts of its early members, philological analyses have brought to light the internal inconsistencies, indeed the whole disparity of the circle;<sup>3</sup> above all, younger authors, motivated by changes in the *Zeitgeist*, have continued to discover new themes which have thus far remained unnoticed in the old writings;<sup>4</sup> finally, however, the critical discussion that the Frankfurt School has stimulated for over twenty years has also revealed materially relevant deficiencies and theoretical aporias in the original project.<sup>5</sup> This process has in some cases led to the admission of a fundamental weakness in critical theory (see, e.g., Brandt: 1986).

Thus, for all the continual, indeed increasing, interest that critical theory has attracted internationally,<sup>6</sup> a sober awareness of its theoretical achievements is what prevails today. Every new wave of interest has, with its research endeavours, removed from the old project a part

of its initial fascination and gradually shaped it into a realistic theoretical approach that is open to verification. Every current attempt at a systematic reconstruction of critical theory has to proceed from the critical findings that this process has unearthed. Only with the awareness of all its deficiencies can one today productively continue the theoretical tradition originated by Horkheimer. In what follows I want to attempt such a systematic reconstruction of critical theory by supplementing the existing results with a further thesis, which is that the social-theoretical means whereby Horkheimer's goals might have been successfully realized were present solely in the works of those authors who held a more peripheral position in the Institute for Social Research. While Horkheimer, and later Adorno and Marcuse, grounded the idea of a philosophically oriented and at the same time empirically-founded theory of society firmly in the context of the contemporary sciences, they were not able to realize this claim, exemplary though it was, because they lacked an appropriate concept for the analysis of societal processes. On the other hand, Benjamin's, Neumann's, Kirchheimer's and, later, Fromm's material inquiries contained sociological insights and suggestions, which, taken together, could have provided pointers for such a societal concept. If the works of these authors had been taken more seriously with respect to their social-theoretical substance, then the philosophically-formulated objectives of critical theory could have been sociologically realized in a more fruitful manner.

In this essay I shall, following a brief sketch of the programmatic objectives in which critical theory was grounded by Max Horkheimer, identify the theoretically-based assumptions that prevented the 'inner circle' of the Institute for Social Research from successfully realizing the original concept. I shall then examine the social-theoretical alternative offered in the works of the 'outer circle' and, finally, after a brief glance at the post-war development of the institute, I shall consider implications of my thesis for Habermas's revision of critical theory.

## I. Max Horkheimer and the Origins of Critical Theory

Among the many attempts undertaken in the period between the two world wars to develop Marxism in a productive manner, critical theory assumes an outstanding position. It was not so much its theoretical principles but, above all, its methodological objectives which distinguished this theory from comparable approaches; these objectives arose out of an unreserved and programmatic acknowledgment of the

specialist sciences. The systematic utilization of all social-scientific research disciplines in the development of a materialist theory of society was critical theory's principal goal; it hoped thereby to overcome the long-standing theoretical purism of historical materialism and make room for the possibility of a fruitful merger of academic social science and Marxist theory. This conception of the methodological objective found its most capable representative in Max Horkheimer, who was 'positivistic' enough to be able to acknowledge the value of the specialist sciences; in him the plan of an interdisciplinarily expanded Marxism grew to maturity. 7

To realize this wide-ranging objective, an intellectual climate and geographical location were required which would attract scientists of different disciplines but of similar orientation; in addition, institutional facilities were needed in order to permit these scientists to work together under one roof. In the Frankfurt of the twenties such an intellectual climate existed; supported by a wealthy and open-minded bourgeoisie, forums of cultural life had emerged here: the newly-founded university, a liberal newspaper, a radio station happy to experiment and, finally, *Das Freie Jüdische Lehrhaus* (Free Jewish House of Instruction) in all a cultural life that led to an exceptional concentration of intellectual energy.<sup>8</sup> In the Institute of Social Research the same city had gained a research centre which had the financial and organizational means to back social scientific projects. At this institute, founded at the instigation of Felix Weil in 1924 and affiliated to the university, research on the history of socialism was carried out in the first years.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in 1930, when Max Horkheimer was appointed to succeed Grünberg as director of this institute, it was receptive to the proposal that it should provide the means and facilities for the organizational realization of the programme for an interdisciplinary theory of society. Horkheimer used his inaugural address as the occasion to present for the first time in public the programme of a critical theory of society (Horkheimer: 1972d). In the journal *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (or 'Studies in Philosophy and Social Science', as it was called in America), which was founded in 1932 and henceforth formed the intellectual centre of the institute's work,<sup>10</sup> Horkheimer, together with Herbert Marcuse, attempted to elaborate this approach in the following years.

The contemporary position of the human sciences formed the background of the somewhat programmatic articles in which the project of critical theory gradually assumed its methodological shape.<sup>11</sup> On the level of the history of ideas, Horkheimer saw the situation into which the effort to develop a theory of society is placed as characterized by a divergence of empirical research and philosophical thinking. For him, the

Hegelian philosophy of history represented the last figure of a theoretical tradition in which both branches of knowledge were merged into a single mode of thought in such a way that the empirical analysis of reality coincided with the philosophical-historical conception of reason. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, the idealist premisses on which this philosophy of history was based, as well as the unifying bond which had thus far held empirical research and philosophical reflection together, was dissolved. As a result, the two branches of the philosophy of history stood, unmediated, opposite each other, embodied in the new positivism and contemporary metaphysics. In positivism, empirical knowledge of reality is reduced to a mere search for facts, since such knowledge is separated from any philosophical self-confirmation; in the contemporary metaphysics of Max Scheler's and Nicolai Hartmann's philosophical projects, the reflection of reason atrophies to mere speculation on essence, since such reflection is independent of any theoretical reference to empirical-historical reality. 12

For Horkheimer, the real problem of this situation in intellectual history was its displacement of the very possibility of thinking in terms of a philosophy of history, for, in the abstract division between scientism and metaphysics to which the post-Hegelian development of thinking had led there is no place for the idea of a historically embodied reason on which the classical philosophy of history has always been based. Along with a philosophy of history, however, the possibility of a transcending critique is also removed from every theory of society: no longer are any cognitive means available to this theory to measure the given relations of a society against a transcending idea of reason. Therefore the foundation of a critical theory of society first presupposed the overcoming of that historical fissure between empirical research and philosophy. Epistemologically, Horkheimer's and Marcuse's articles were directed at a systematic critique of positivism; methodologically, they were aimed at a concept of interdisciplinary research.

The materialist epistemology of the early Marx was the key to the institute's critique of positivism. Horkheimer adopted this approach, which initially was only sketched out in Marx's writings, from Lukács (see Jay: 1984, ch. 6): Marcuse, on the other hand, appropriated it from Heidegger.<sup>13</sup> But both of them proceeded from the presupposition that the empirical sciences right through to their methodology are determined by the demands of societal labour; here, the production of theoretical statements subserves the same interest of a mastery of physical nature by which the activity of labour is already guided on a pre-scientific level. As soon as this constitutive practical context of the sciences has been rendered transparent epistemologically, the misunderstanding-



ing emerges, however, to which positivism must inevitably lead: by justifying the sciences only on a methodological level, positivism cuts them off both from the consciousness of their own societal roots and from the knowledge of their practical objectives. In the denial of the practical framework of scientific theories Horkheimer and Marcuse saw, of course, not only the error of contemporary positivism but also the deficiency of the modern understanding of theory in general; Horkheimer retraces to as far back as Descartes the roots of that positivist consciousness which permits the sciences to appear as a pure undertaking completely detached from practical interests. 'Traditional theory' is the name he gives to this tradition of scientism which stretches across the entire period of modernity; this both he and Marcuse contrasted with 'critical theory' understood as a theory that is constantly aware of its social context of emergence as well as of its practical context of application.

Critical theory can fulfill the task thereby expected of it only if, at the same time, it has at its disposal a theory of history which is able to enlighten it about its own position and role in the historical process. Therefore, if only for epistemological reasons, the grounding of a critical theory of society demanded a reflection on the philosophical-historical level in a form for which no legitimate place was provided in the contemporary division between philosophy and the sciences. The rudiments of such a theory of history were already implicitly set out in the materialist epistemology which Horkheimer and Marcuse relied on in their critique of positivism; they elaborated these rudiments into a general framework of interpretation by extending them around the basic assumptions of historical materialism. In the thirties, Horkheimer and Marcuse still unwaveringly advocated the classical version of the Marxist theory of history. According to this, a process of development of the forces of production is taken to be the central mechanism of societal progress; along with every expanded stage in the technical system of the mastery of nature, this process also forces a new stage in the social relations of production (see, e.g., Horkheimer: 1932). Critical theory should be included in this historical event not simply like the empirical sciences as a cognitive authority in the labour process, but rather as a critical authority in societal self-knowledge; following Horkheimer, Marcuse stated that in critical theory 'the possibilities, to which the societal situation itself has matured', attain consciousness (Marcuse: 1968). The societal position and the practical function of critical theory were evaluated in terms of the extent to which the potential for reason present in the productive forces had already been set free in the new forms of societal organization; just as, once, Hegel's philosophy of history was assigned to research critically, with idealist presuppositions,

the empirical course of history with reference to the possibilities of reason embodied in it, so critical theory now assumed this same task on the basis of materialist premisses.

If it is the case that these preliminary epistemological considerations moved along similar lines to a productivist philosophy of history advocated by Lukács and Korsch at that time, 14 then it was only in the next methodological step of critical theory that Horkheimer and Marcuse broke new ground; with this step they found what is today retrospectively called 'interdisciplinary materialism' (see, e.g., Bonss and Schindler: 1982) Both proceeded on the assumption that to the diagnosis on the philosophical-historical level, with which critical theory begins, there must be added empirical social research as a second current of reflectionhence the necessity for the cooperation of different disciplines. Neither for Horkheimer nor for Marcuse was it the case that it is exclusively the task of political economy empirically to examine society's condition in terms of a philosophy of history: a critical theory of society must make use of the entire spectrum of social scientific disciplines in order to be able to research appropriately the present conflict between the productive forces and relations of production. Horkheimer outlined the general model for the methodological relation between the philosophy of history and interdisciplinary research. It specifies a 'dialectical' dovetailing of both which was constituted such that "philosophy, as a theoretical intention focused on the universal, the 'essential,' is in a position to give inspiring impulses to the specialist disciplines and, at the same time, is open enough to the world in order to allow itself to be impressed and changed by the advance of concrete studies." (Horkheimer: 1972d, p. 41).

It is also Horkheimer who determined this methodological outline of a critical theory of society and thereby determined the research programme of the institute for the thirties. The empirical problem, which he regarded as the focus of cooperation among the specialized disciplines, followed for him from an application of the materialist philosophy of history to the contemporary situation: if the historical process in general progresses in such a way that the potential for reason embodied in the productive forces is released time and again in social conflicts, then, under the special conditions of the present, the question arises as to precisely which mechanisms prevent the outbreak of such conflicts. Just like many other Marxists of his generation, the young Horkheimer perceived the process of the increasing integration of the working class into the advanced capitalist societal system as the most striking developmental tendency of his time.15 Horkheimer's perspective was so one-sidedly concentrated on this integrative achievement of advanced

capitalism that he made it the point of reference for the entire research work of the institute; during the thirties, its interdisciplinary investigations were wholly concerned with the question, 'how [do] the mental mechanisms come about, by which it is possible that tensions between social classes, which feel impelled toward conflict because of the economic situation, can remain latent?' (Horkheimer: 1932, p. 136).

The formulation of that question demonstrates how Horkheimer had already conceived, in detail, the construction of interdisciplinary social analysis: the central discipline from then on was to be political economy; it alone is in a position to mediate materially between the philosophy of history and the specialist sciences because its investigates, from an empirical standpoint, the same process of capitalist production which appears, from a philosophical-historical perspective, as a stage in the realization of reason. If it is thus the case that political economy represents the theoretical backbone of a materialist social science, then, under the changed conditions, a second discipline must step alongside it. Since the potential for reason accumulated in the capitalist productive forces is no longer reflected in the class action of the proletariat as still assumed in the Marxist theory of revolution, an additional investigation of the 'irrational' binding forces that prevent that class from perceiving its actual interests is required. For Horkheimer, it was beyond question that this task could be accomplished only by means of a psychology informed by Freud. Finally, yet a third discipline must step between political economy and psychology because the social demands to conform do not strike the individual psyche unmediated, but rather only in a culturally refracted manner. As a concluding element of the research project he had sketched, Horkheimer envisaged a theory of culture that has to investigate the cultural conditions under which individual socialization in advanced capitalism takes place. From the interconnection of these three disciplines there ensues the tasks that Horkheimer assigned to critical theory in its first phase; they comprise the economic analysis of the post-liberal phase of capitalism, the social-psychological investigation of the societal integration of individuals, and the cultural-theoretical analysis of the mode of operation of mass culture. However, Horkheimer and his collaborators could only achieve a theoretical unity in his programme by using Marxist functionalism to establish a direct dependence between the individual elements of the investigation.

### *1 The Economic Analysis of Post-Liberal Capitalism*

Horkheimer saw political economy as undertaking the central task of investigating the far-reaching process of change which had taken hold

of capitalism since the end of its liberal phase. It was above all the emergence of National Socialism which raised the question of whether a changed organizational principle of capitalism was perhaps starting to emerge in the planned economy features of the new economic system. Friedrich Pollock, a 'left-wing bourgeois' economist who grew up with Horkheimer, was entrusted with researching this area at the institute; 16 during the thirties he studied the newly emerging planned economy, and his findings were followed in their entirety by the 'inner circle' of the institute's members. Pollock's views are quintessentially expressed in the concept of 'state capitalism' (Pollock: 1941: 1975). He believed that, with National Socialism as well as with Soviet Communism, a planned-economy form of capitalism had taken shape in which the steering medium of the market had been supplanted by bureaucratic planning authorities. The management of the capitalist conglomerates had so seamlessly coalesced with the political power elites that full societal integration could henceforth take place in the form of centralized administrative domination. Originally undertaken as a specialized study, this analysis soon became the starting-point of a global theory of post-liberal capitalism (see, e.g., Horkheimer: 1972c); it provided the general framework within which the psychological and cultural-theoretical investigations could find their place.

## 2 *The Social-Psychological Investigation of Societal Integration*

Though the new organizational form of capitalist production could be explained by the theory of state capitalism, the question that could not be answered was why the individuals, apparently without resistance, submit to a centrally-administered system of domination. Horkheimer delegated this task of social-psychological investigation to his friend Erich Fromm. With Fromm's arrival, the institute gained a crucial advocate of that intellectual movement of the Weimar Republic which strived for an integration of historical materialism and psychoanalysis.<sup>17</sup> Fromm, who had been practising as an analyst since 1926 and who was closely associated with *Das Freie Jüdische Lehrhaus*, was completely indebted to the 'Freudian Left' in his early studies.<sup>18</sup> Like Siegfried Bernfeld or Wilhelm Reich, he proceeded on the assumption that the integration of individuals into the capitalist system of domination comes about by way of the social formation of their psycho-sexual character. This general explanatory model, in which insights of psychoanalysis are linked with those of a Marxist sociology, was applied by Fromm in his investigations at the institute.<sup>19</sup> Its point of departure is the observation that the development of the state capitalist order en-

tails a structural change in the bourgeois nuclear family; together with the economic basis of his authority, which was still accorded to him under liberal capitalist conditions, the male loses the unquestioned patriarchal authority which he previously possessed. The authoritative point of reference from which the child could develop and strengthen his ego is therefore lost, and the structural change of the family thus proceeds hand in hand with a weakening of the adolescent ego, as a consequence of which an authority bound, easily manipulable personality-type emerges. Once again it was Horkheimer who gave a general form to the disparate and frequently speculative reflections of Fromm; the theory of the 'authoritarian personality', which combined the social-psychological investigations of the institute (Horkheimer: 1972b), was soon to be adopted by all the members of the 'inner circle'.

### *3 The Cultural-Theoretical Analysis of Mass Culture*

The economic and the social-psychological approaches of the institute were related to one another by means of functionalist premisses such that, taken together, the image they produce is of a self-enclosed integration of society. The economic structural analysis disclosed the developmental tendencies which allow capitalism to set a course for a planned-economy system of domination; from the alterations that this process of change entails in 'familial' socialization, social-psychological analysis then worked out the mechanisms by which individuals are smoothly adjusted to the new behavioural demands. The theory of culture, the third component of the research project envisaged by Horkheimer, would have been the place to force open the closed functionalism of such an analysis of society. Here, it could have been demonstrated that socialized subjects are not simply passively subjected to an anonymous steering process but, rather, actively participate with their own interpretative performances in the complex process of social integration. In fact, Horkheimer had, at the beginning, assigned a task to the analysis of culture that theoretically approached this insight: like subcultural research today, it was to have empirically investigated those 'moral customs' and 'life-styles' in which the everyday communicative practice of social groups finds expression. 20 If Horkheimer had subsequently followed this line of research, thenas could be exemplarily demonstrated with the phenomenon of culturethat logically independent dimension of social action-orientations and value patterns, which cannot be viewed as a merely functional element in the reproduction of domination, would have become visible to him. Instead of this, however, and even before he was himself aware of the action-

theoretic logic of his initial conceptual determinations, he had led the analysis of culture back into the functionalist reference system into which he had already previously integrated political economy and social psychology. 21 In this altered context, Horkheimer understood as 'culture' (wherever works of art are not at issue) only that totality of cultural facilities and 'apparatuses' which further mediate the externally imposed behavioural demands of society with the individual's psyche, which has become manipulable. Above all, the investigations that Theodor W. Adorno submitted on the emergence and effects of the culture industry move within the horizons of such a concept of culture, which is limited in terms of a theory of institutions.<sup>22</sup> In the institute, a type of cultural research was thus adopted in whose framework culture as in the Marxist superstructural-basis doctrine appears solely as a functional component in securing domination. Once again, Horkheimer's recourse to a functionalist system of reference can be traced back to the basic assumptions of his philosophy of history which formed the basis of his entire interdisciplinary research project; among these can be seen the theoretical premisses that were necessarily the undoing of critical theory in its first phase.

## II. The Theoretical Weaknesses of Critical Theory

If the different investigations that the members of the inner circle of the institute made in the course of the thirties are joined together into a theoretical whole, then what appears is the image of a totally integrated society; social life therein exhausts itself as in the visions of theories of totalitarianism in a closed circuit of the centralized exercise of domination, of cultural control and of individual conformity. If this image, given the societal circumstances with which the institute's members were confronted in the face of Fascism and Stalinism, may find a certain measure of historical justification, then, in contrast, from a systemic point of view it proves itself to be the result of a theoretically faulty construction. In the social-theoretical system of reference on which Horkheimer based his programme, that dimension of social action in which moral convictions and normative orientations form themselves independently is systematically excluded: this programme was so designed that only those social processes which can assume functions in the reproduction and expansion of social labour can find a place within it. This functionalist reductionism had its origins in the philosophical-historical premisses on which Horkheimer's, but also Marcuse's and Adorno's, deliberations were generally based.

At the time, one thing was common to the philosophical works of all these authors: even though their thinking as a whole aimed radically to renew social philosophy, the basic convictions of their philosophy of history which they brought to bear in this attempt were nevertheless deeply rooted in the tradition of Marxism. Even where they attempt to rid themselves of this dogmatic residue, it is still done from the constantly retained perspective of the Marxist philosophy of history. Neither the pioneering achievements of Durkheim and his school, nor the theoretical innovations of pragmatism, could ever have fallen on fertile ground here; the close circle of the institute remained constantly closed in the face of all attempts to consider the historical process other than from the point of view of the development of societal labour. There are two theoretical premisses which determine the conceptual framework of the philosophy of history within which the works of Horkheimer, Marcuse and Adorno, notwithstanding differences in detail, jointly move. First, all three assume that human reason or rationality must be capable of being understood as the intellectual faculty for the instrumental disposal over natural objects; to this extent, all three remain bound to the conceptual tradition of the philosophy of consciousness which construes human rationality according to the model of the cognitive relation of a subject to an object.<sup>23</sup> Second, all agree on the conclusion that can be drawn from the philosophical-historical premisses for a theory of history: namely, that historical development takes place above all as a process of unfolding precisely that potential for rationality which is articulated in the instrumental disposal of man over natural objects. To this extent, they remain bound to the tendency already predominant in Marx, to instrumentally foreshorten human history to a developmental unfolding of the societal processing of nature (see Honneth: 1991, part 1, pp. 1ff.).

However shaped in the details by the influence of Lukács and Korsch,<sup>24</sup> Dilthey and Heidegger<sup>25</sup> or, finally, Benjamin,<sup>26</sup> it is this reductionist philosophy of history which served the research work of the institute as a general system of reference in its first decade. Not only are the theoretical deficits which have been identified in the normative foundations of early critical theory<sup>27</sup> grounded therein, but also the problems which we have followed in connection with Horkheimer's construction of an interdisciplinary theory of society. The functionalist style of Horkheimer's programme is the methodological consequence of the reductionism with which his philosophical-historical referential model is imbued.<sup>28</sup> Because no other type of social action is conceded alongside of societal labour, Horkheimer can only take the instrumental forms of societal practice systematically into account on the level of



his theory of society, and thus loses sight of that dimension of everyday practice in which socialized subjects generate and creatively develop common action-orientations in a communicative manner. Only by considering this communicative sphere of everyday social practice could Horkheimer have discovered that societal reproduction never takes place in the form of a blind compliance with functional imperatives, but only by way of the integration of group-specific action norms. In his thinking the idea must break through that societies reproduce themselves in principle independent of the communicatively gained self-understanding of their members, in that, with the help of systemic steering processes, economic imperatives are anchored directly in the individual's emotional constitution [*Bedürfnis-natur*]. As a consequence of such a conceptual model, the closed functionalism can finally emerge, and it is in this form that Horkheimer's programme of an 'interdisciplinary materialism' was ultimately presented.

Now in the institute itself, the idea of interdisciplinary social research enjoyed a lively and productive reception only up until the beginning of the forties. A general change of orientation was already perceptible in the articles that Horkheimer contributed to the last volume of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 29 (which ceased publication in 1941), a change that not only implicated the philosophical-historical premisses of critical theory but also the position of the specialist sciences within that theory. In these articles Horkheimer increasingly yielded to a pessimistic philosophy of history whose roots reach so far back into the early phase of his own intellectual biography that his writings of the thirties look, in retrospect, like a mere theoretical interlude (see Korthals: 1985). Just as at the time of his first reading of Schopenhauer, the dominating theme for Horkheimer now again became the destructive potential of human reason. True, the concept of work still formed the categorial foundation of this new conception of the philosophy of history, but instead of looking at the emancipatory possibilities stored in the process of the societal mastery of nature, Horkheimer now directed his gaze at the devastating effects which the cognitive accomplishments presupposed in human labour-practice entail. It was the change from a positive to a negative concept of societal labour that introduced a new phase in the history of critical theory; the position thus far occupied by the productivist conception of progress was taken here by a critique of reason skeptical of progress and so radical that it must also doubt the cognitive value of the specialist disciplines.

Admittedly, it was not Max Horkheimer, but Theodor W. Adorno who was the outstanding representative of this new conception of critical theory. His thinking, like scarcely any others' of his time, was



stamped with the historical experience of Fascism as a calamity for civilization; 30 this permitted him, from the very beginning, to view with skepticism what, by the way of historical-materialistic ideas of progress, had gone into the original programme of the institute. In addition, his intellectual development had been so heavily influenced by artistic interests that he had not unnaturally queried the narrow nationalism of the Marxist tradition of theory. Under the influence of Walter Benjamin, this reservation allowed him soon to undertake the first attempts to make aesthetic methods of interpretation fruitful for the materialist philosophy of history (see Buck-Morss: 1977, esp. ch. 6). Of course in Adorno's philosophy too, both conceptual themesscepticism about progress, and the methodological place of honour for the aesthetic contents of experiencetake effect only within the framework of those premisses of the philosophy of consciousness that had already been determining for Horkheimer's theoretical model. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), which they wrote together at the beginning of the forties and which subsequently gave the name to the new conception of critical theory, these different themes and tendencies came together in a single book.

In its philosophical-historical approach, this book had already risen above the horizons of the institute's early programme: the totalitarian condition into which the world had fallen with the rise of Fascism is no longer to be explained by the conflict of productive forces and relations of production, but by the internal dynamic of the formation of human consciousness. Horkheimer and Adorno left the framework of theories of capitalism, within which the institute's social research had thus far moved, and instead presupposed the civilization process in its entirety as the system of reference for their theory, in which Fascism appears as the historical end-stage of a 'logic of disintegration' that is present even in the original form of existence of the species. The explanation of the mechanisms that have, right from the outset, forced the civilization process into this logic of disintegration constitutes the actual task of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; literary and philosophical works of the European history of ideas make up its primary material, and its style of argument is more that of the aphoristically-pointed essay than of an empirically designed investigation. The concept of the societal mastery of nature represents the only link with the original approach of critical theory, since it is as central for the new approach as it was for the philosophical-historical-based reference system of the empirical research programme. However, the same concept now receives a changed meaning:31 in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'societal labour' no longer designates a form of emancipatory practice but, rather, the

germ-cell of objectivizing thinking. For this form of a reified thinking that emerges concomitantly with the human processing of nature, Horkheimer and Adorno use the concept of 'instrumental rationality'; the central function assigned to this concept is to explain the origin and dynamics of the phylogenetic process of disintegration.

The new concept, which from then on characterized a key theme of critical theory, was indebted to the reorientation of Lukács's concept of reification in the direction of the anthropological. Horkheimer and Adorno understood the reifying thought forms, which Lukács derived from the abstraction imperatives of capitalist commodity exchange (Lukács: 1971), as an immanent component of humanity's instrumental disposal over nature. The ideas prompted by Alfred Sohn-Rethel's analysis of the abstraction of exchange find their limits in the central premiss of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, that is, that with the first act of the mastery of nature, the compulsion toward instrumental forms of thinking is already inevitably established. 32 If, for Horkheimer and Adorno, the emergence of instrumental rationality is thereby explained by the elementary structures of human labour, then they derive the historical dynamic of this rationality from the self-determined tendency with which its effects are shifted into the physical and social life of the human species: the prehistoric efforts of instrumental thinking, by which humanity learns to assert itself over nature, are propagated step by step in the disciplining of the instincts, in the impoverishment of the sensual capabilities, and in the formation of social relation of domination. In this thesis, which essentially rests on a series of anthropological and ethnological arguments on which only more recent textual interpretations have cast light (see esp. Cochetti: 1985, Früchtel: 1986), the different parts of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* reach an agreement about a common result: it amounts to nothing less than the claim that the entire process of human civilization is determined by a logic of gradual reification which is set in motion by the first act of the mastery of nature and is brought to its consequential completion in Fascism.

This philosophical-historical thesis can only be fully understood when, as its normative point of reference, an aesthetic model of personality is also considered in which humanity's freedom is defined as the ability to submit properly to nature. Because Horkheimer and Adorno view human emancipation as linked to the presupposition of a reconciliation with nature, they have to see in every act of the mastery of nature a step toward the self-alienation of the species. The arguments with which they substantiate the further influence of that initial reification in mental and social life issue from the same philosophical tradition of thought within which the aesthetic personality-model is also resident;

this tradition is circumscribed by early German Romanticism on the one hand and by the philosophy of life on the other. This line of tradition forms, with respect to the history of theory, a background which the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explicitly reveals only at few points; 33 the first to have critically referred to this background was Galvana della Volpe (1973) who viewed the book as nothing more than a product of 'late Romanticism'. However it is not, as della Volpe seems to assume, the romantic and life-philosophical themes that constitute the theoretical weakness of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but rather the philosophical-historical framework within which these themes first gain significance.

As with the interdisciplinary research programme of the thirties, Horkheimer's and Adorno's theoretical work in the forties was also determined by a philosophy of history which reduces the historical process to a dimension of the mastery of nature. Though the premisses of a 'philosophy of consciousness,' which underlie such a theoretical reductionism, now appeared in a negativistic form, this normative reevaluation nevertheless leaves the conceptual constraints on thinking that follow from these premisses essentially untouched. Therefore, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno are forced to conceive of all social action according to the same pattern of the instrumental disposal of a subject over an object; this alone, and not the romantic tradition from which they draw, provides them with the basis for claiming the effectiveness of the same 'logic of reification' for the three dimensions of societal labour, the socialization of individuals and, finally, social domination. Because Horkheimer and Adorno, as can be shown in detail (see Honneth: 1985, ch. 2), conceptualized from the beginning both the process of the formation of individual needs and the process of the social exercise of domination according to the model of instrumental acts of disposal, they could, in retrospect, effortlessly see the civilization process as a whole dominated by the same instrumental rationality that underlies the act of the mastery of nature.

Not surprisingly, all creative accomplishments of interacting subjects and groups fall victim to this philosophical-historical reductionism; the entire sphere of communicative everyday practice is so decisively excluded from the investigation of the process of civilization that social advances, such as occurred in this period, do not enter into the picture. One consequence, as can be seen in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, was the denial of another dimension in the progress of civilization which finds expression not in an increase of the forces of production, but in an expansion of judicial liberties and of the individual's scope for action (see Habermas: 1987, ch. 5); a second consequence was of a methodological kind and of no less significance for the further

development of critical theory. Horkheimer and Adorno applied the philosophical-historical critique so generally that they had to comprehend every form of scientific knowledge, including social scientific research, as an element in the process of reification in civilization. They were thus forced to remove yet again the critical theory of society from the embrace of the empirical social sciences and return it to the exclusive domain of philosophy. With the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, critical theory returned to the sphere of a philosophically self-contained theory from which, in the first place, it wished to free itself with the methodological move into interdisciplinary social research. From then on and into the post-war period, there was again a systematically unbridgeable gap between the philosophical and social scientific work of the institute. This gap was, once again, further widened by the philosophical investigations through which Adorno and Horkheimer continued their joint venture, although in separate ways, in the *Negative Dialectics* and the *Eclipse of Reason*. 34

### III. The Social-Theoretical Alternative

The theoretical works of those who were briefly or indirectly or, in any case, more loosely associated with the institute<sup>35</sup> recede behind the preeminent importance which Horkheimer's, Adorno's, and Marcuse's writings acquired in the public image of critical theory. Given that this latter group of permanent institute members can be characterized only with difficulty as a homogeneous research circle, then this holds all the more for that group of three, or rather four, authors who, though they introduced all the important investigations in the research context of the institute, never merged their scientific identity with its programme and tradition. Thus, from the beginning, it was only their common marginal position which allows, in retrospect, Franz Neumann, Otto Kirchheimer, Walter Benjamin and, perhaps, Erich Fromm to be regarded as a single group. At first sight there is no interpretative foundation for contrasting them as an 'outer circle' with an 'inner circle' formed by Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Löwenthal and Pollock. Nor at first sight is there any common ground among the four authors in a sociological, or even social-philosophical, respect: Neumann and Kirchheimer both were trained in jurisprudence and both reached political maturity in German social democracy; contributed investigations on theories of law and the state to the institute's work during the period of exile in New York;<sup>36</sup> Benjamin, an independent thinker, one of few found in our century, was, until his suicide in 1940, irregularly com-

missioned by the institute to research issues relating to theories of literature and culture; 37 Fromm, certainly at first a close associate of Horkheimer and fully committed to the institute, took, when in exile in New York, a new course in the interpretation of psychoanalysis which caused relations with the institute to be broken off in 1939.<sup>38</sup>

Thus these different authors cannot be compared either in their theoretical orientations nor in their thematic alignments; what fundamentally unites them is the overall direction of their thinking which allowed them as a body to go beyond the functionalist reference system of the original programme of the institute. The spirit of opposition of all four authors is ignited by Marxist functionalism, against which they oppose considerations that converge in a positive revaluation of individuals' and groups' own communicative performances. True, this underlying impulse, which presses toward an overcoming of the philosophical-historical reductionism laid out in the categorial premisses of Marxism, is not expressly voiced in any of the works, but it is visible at every point where theoretical differences between representatives of the two groups within the institute begin to surface. It was not accidental divergence in object conception, but rather systemic differences in the theoretical model of society that in every case separated the inner from the outer circle.

Neumann's and Kirchheimer's knowledge of jurisprudence and political science was very fruitful in various investigations concerning the political form of integration of advanced capitalist societies. Their legal and scientific background meant that both were fully conversant with the view that law is a central steering mechanism of bourgeois society; they regarded constitutional law as the socially-generalized outcome of a political compromise which the classes, with varying degrees of power, had agreed upon under the conditions of private capitalism. This social-theoretical premiss constituted the background for the analyses in which Neumann, like Kirchheimer, investigated the formal constitutional alterations which accompany the change in the economic structure of capitalism.<sup>39</sup> The issue over which, as a group, they finally came into conflict with the institute's directorship concerned the organizational principles that underlay the new dominating order of National Socialism. Neumann and Kirchheimer advanced empirically-grounded objections to the 'state capitalism' thesis put forward by Horkheimer and Pollock. The social scientific investigations which they had conducted from their American exile on the situation in Germany (Kirchheimer: 1976b; 1976c; Neumann: 1978b) and their practical political experience of the end of the Weimar Republic, convinced them of the unbroken primacy of private capitalist interests over state management of the economy. Neumann and Kirchheimer could not there-

fore accept Pollock's thesis that, in National Socialism, state management of the market had merely devolved upon a centralized administrative bureaucracy; rather, they continued to argue that Fascism had not annulled the functional laws of the capitalist market as such but had simply placed them under the additional control of compulsory totalitarian measures. This thesis, with its doctrine of political compromise, was summarized in a single formula in the concept of the 'totalitarian monopolistic economy', which Neumann, in his investigation *Behemoth*, programmatically opposed to the concept of state capitalism (Neumann: 1966, pp. 221ff.).<sup>40</sup> This thesis claimed that National Socialist domination came about in the form of a socially restricted compromise which was freed from constitutional obligations and in which party, economic and administrative elites agreed upon political measures that, ultimately, had as their goal the improvement of monopolistic opportunities for profit.

It was not of course simply the empirical knowledge alone which allowed Neumann and Kirchheimer to follow the path of this analysis of Fascism, an analysis which has since been largely confirmed;<sup>41</sup> what equally contributes to the superiority of their interpretation as against the state-capitalism thesis are the social-theoretical conceptions implicit in their work. From the outset, Neumann and Kirchheimer perceived the societal order from a different perspective than the one that prevailed in the closer circle around Horkheimer; for the former, social integration represents a process which comes about not simply by means of the unconscious compliance with the functional imperatives of society, but also by way of political communication between social groups. Because of their concern about the position of the constitutional state, Neumann and Kirchheimer were for the first time confronted with the phenomenon of political legitimacy; as a result, they realized that the constitutional order of a society is always the expression of a generalizable compromise or consensus between political forces. The active participation in class conflicts that characterized the Weimar Republic led to a realistic assessment of the 'relative strength of social interests' (Kirchheimer: 1978): for Neumann and Kirchheimer, the power potential arising out of capitalist control of the means of production is not to be under-estimated. Finally, their experiences of Austro-Marxism<sup>42</sup> revealed to both of them the compromise character of a societal order as a whole: the institutions of a society are no more than momentary expressions of the social agreements which the different interest groups accept in accordance with their respective power potential.

In Neumann's and Kirchheimer's thinking all this comes together to form a concept of society whose centre is occupied by the comprehen-

sive process of communication between social groups. This concept not only prevents the uncritical adoption of ideas that view all societal groups as completely integrated in the social order, 43 but above all sets up barriers against that Marxist functionalism toward which Horkheimer and his associates inclined. Neumann's and Kirchheimer's analyses always start from the interests and orientations that social groups themselves bring into societal reproduction on the basis of their class position. From the communicative process in which the different groups negotiate these interests among themselves through the utilization of their respective power potential, there emerges the fragile compromise which finds expression in the institutional constitution of a society.

Because both Neumann and Kirchheimer thought in this way they could not assume that societal integration comes about by way of a steering process which simply extends into the symbolically mediated interests and orientation of social groups. For both of them it is the group-specific action perspectives and not the systemically produced instinctual motives that shape the social element out of which the integrative process of a society is formed. Thus Neumann's and Kirchheimer's concern is neither Marxist functionalism nor the assumption that totalitarianism is merely a delusional system (*Verblendungszusammenhang*) that has become total. Finally, if only for social-theoretical reasons, Neumann and Kirchheimer resist tendencies toward a centralism at the level of a theory of power tendencies which can be found in Horkheimer and his associates because they consider the totalitarian state a homogeneous power centre, whereas for Neumann and Kirchheimer it is a self-evident assumption that state domination always grows out of an intertwinement of the power potentials of different interest groups.<sup>44</sup> The superiority of the social-theoretical approach, which is more implicitly than explicitly found in Neumann and Kirchheimer, is evident in the empirical richness and material diversity of their analyses of Fascism; precisely because they explain totalitarian domination in terms of an interplay of rival interest groups, their theories are still of value today.

Benjamin's intellectual path crossed the social-theoretical avenue of Neumann and Kirchheimer only at a single point: for him too, the conflict of social classes is both a continually effervescent experience and, at the same time, a theoretical premiss of every analysis of culture and society. Admittedly, Benjamin's interest lay not so much in a sociological investigation of society as in a diagnosis of the times in terms of philosophy of history. The driving force behind this philosophy of history is the idea of a redemption of humanity from the guilt of social repression and domination; it draws its central insights from the tradi-



tion of Jewish Messianism and its social-theoretical view is formed by the ideas of historical materialism. 45 As a thinker who brought together very different theoretical traditions in his works, Benjamin had as close or as distant a connection to critical theory as to Gershom Scholem's Jewish hermeneutic and to Bertolt Brecht's materialist theory of literature. Of course, the interest in art as a theoretical source of knowledge linked him to Adorno from the very beginning (see Buck-Morss: 1977), and the preference for a micrological analysis of everyday culture connected him to Siegfried Kracauer.46

It was on the question of the effects of the new media of modern mass culture on society and on art generally that Benjamin came into conflict with the leading associates of the institute. Like Adorno and Horkheimer, Benjamin at first perceived the emergence of the culture industry as a process destroying the autonomous work of art: in so far as the products of artistic labour are technically reproducible, they lose that cultic aura which previously lifted them, like a sacred relic, out of the profane everyday world of the beholder (Benjamin: 1973b). The technical media of film, radio and photography destroy the aura surrounding the art product and expose it to an unreserved, public examination; the contemplative form of the solitary enjoyment of art is suppressed by public methods of experiencing art collectively. However, the differences of opinion in the institute were ignited not by the identification of these developmental tendencies in culture, but by the assessment of the receptive behaviour they engendered. In the destruction of aesthetic aura Adorno saw a process that forces the beholder to become a passive, reflectionless consumer and thereby renders aesthetic experiences impossible; mass art, which resulted from new reproduction techniques, represented for him nothing more than a 'deaestheticization of art' (Entkünstung der Kunst).47 Benjamin, on the other hand, saw in technicized mass art above all the possibility for new forms of collective perception; he pinned all his hopes on the fact that, in the public's experience of art, close at hand, those illuminations and experiences, which had hitherto only occurred in the esoteric process of the solitary enjoyment of art, could from then on come about in more prosaic circumstances.

As in the debate about the state-capitalism thesis, it is not so much the details of the empirical claims that still merit interest today, since subsequent developments and the state of international research have rendered these claims largely obsolete.48 The social-theoretical considerations concealed behind each of the competing positions are, however, instructive; thus, it becomes apparent that Benjamin and Adorno only arrived at differing assessments of technicized mass culture be-



cause they proceeded implicitly from different concepts of social integration. Not only an unwavering insistence on the knowledge claims of the esoteric work of art alone, but also the presupposition of a closed functionalism allowed Adorno to arrive at a strict rejection of the new art forms. He is so preoccupied with the idea of a systemic process of social control which reaches into all cultural life contexts that he cannot, under any circumstances, credit social groups with the creative performances which would be necessary in order to learn spontaneously new forms of world disclosure from the mass arts. 49 As we have been able to see, Adorno's theory of contemporary society begins with the claim of a system integration which has become total; thus he can regard the entire media of the culture industry only as a means of domination and must rate popular forms of art as phenomena of psychical regression.

Benjamin, however, cannot agree with the premisses of this interpretation since he allows himself to be led, if not by an alternative model of social integration, then at least by other ideas about the composition of social experiences. Accordingly, social groups and classes are ascribed the ability to develop a collective imagination that finds expression in common experiences of perception and in common experiential contents; these collective worlds of perception are always sprinkled with far-fetched images which contain electrifying insights into the context of guilt and redemption of human history. Benjamin arrives at the notion of a pictorial imagination of social groups by way of an idiosyncratic absorption of, on the one hand, Ludwig Klages' anthropological theory and, on the other, Georges Sorel's conception of myth; 50 of course, he additionally fused both theoretical elements with insights which emphasize the significance of forms of social interaction for the constitution of collective experiences. As a theorist of culture, Benjamin was thus primarily interested in the changes occasioned by the process of capitalist modernization in the structures of social interaction, in the narrative forms of experiential exchange and in the spatial conditions of communication, because these changes determine the social conditions under which the historical past enters the pictorial imagination of the masses and thereby acquires immediate significance. From such a perspective, which was the determining factor not only for individual articles by Benjamin but also for a whole series of his book reviews, 51 fragments of another image of social integration necessarily emerge: here, the experiential worlds of different groups and collectives represent not so much the mere material of domination but rather the stubborn energies themselves from which the movement of social life emerges.

If these observations are correct, Benjamin did not think functionalistically. True, he is not a theorist of society in the conventional sense

of the term, for he showed little interest in providing an explanation of the mechanisms of socialization. However, there are still enough social-theoretical elements in his analyses of culture to indicate the extent to which his conceptions went beyond the institute's functionalist level of thinking. For Benjamin, the socio-economic conditions of a society, the forms of commodity exchange and of production, can only represent the material by which the pictorial imaginations of social groups are ignited. Societal experiences are not merely the instinctually charged representations of the functional imperatives of society, but rather the independent expression of the capacity for a collective imagination. Therefore, social integration too is not simply to be conceived as a process that comes about by way of an administrative regulation of individual attitudes and orientations. Rather, individual horizons of orientation always also represent extracts from those group-specific worlds that are independently formed in processes of communicative intercourse and that subsist on the forces of a pictorial imagination. These collective worlds stand together in a conflicting relationship whose respective historical form co-determines the course of societal reproduction; to be sure, Benjamin makes quite plain that it is the cultural struggle of social classes itself that determines the integrative ability of society. This, finally, also provides the motive that allowed Benjamin to reach a different assessment of modern mass art than Adorno: because he, unlike the latter, still credited oppressed groups with an ability to perceive creatively, he could pin all his hopes on the fact that mass-art forms unleash unthought-of potentials of the collective imagination and thereby lead to a politicization of the aesthetic. 52

Like Neumann and Kirchheimer from the perspective of a theory of politics, Benjamin developed, from the perspective of a theory of culture, conceptions and considerations that went beyond the functionalist frame of reference of critical theory; the way this took place led in both cases not only to a more differentiated assessment of the forms of capitalist integration, but also to preliminary insights into the communicative infrastructure of societies. All three were quick to realize that societal life-contexts are integrated by way of processes of social interaction; communications-theoretic insights of this kind are anticipated in the theory of the political compromise worked out by Neumann and Kirchheimer, as well as in the concept of social experience developed by Benjamin in his sociology of culture. Yet, not one of them used these insights as the foundation for an independent theory of society. The anti-functionalist elements found in their empirical investigations did not mature to that level of generality where they could have been transformed into an explicit critique of Marxist functionalism. Thus, the most

sociologically productive research to be conducted under the auspices of the Institute for Social Research remained in the shadow of that philosophically ambitious but sociologically barren theoretical model which the members of the 'inner circle' had developed.

In Erich Fromm's thinking, communications-theoretic insights developed in the microsociological rather than macrosociological domain; the overcoming of the functionalist horizon of thinking, under which he himself had originally moved at the institute, was attained by way of a reinterpretation of psychoanalysis. The impetus for such a reinterpretation came during his exile in the United States which was forced upon him by Fascism in 1934. There, at first still attached to the institute which had resettled in New York, he became acquainted with the writings of those authors concerned with an interactionist revision of the basic assumptions of psychoanalysis. Fromm willingly and rapidly took up the suggestions of this intellectual group, centered around Karen Horney and Harry Stack Sullivan, 53 on how to revise his theory of social psychology. The results of these revisions were published in 1941 in his book *Escape from Freedom*, in which the formation of the bourgeois personality is investigated within the framework of a now fundamentally altered conception of psychoanalysis. A revision of the psychoanalytical theory of instincts is at the core of the new conception. Fromm places the assumption of a pliable instinctual nature in that position which the hypothesis of a fixed, libidinally centred instinct-structure had assumed in Freudian theory; besides 'self-preservation' he adds to the instinctual drives constituting human needs 'social instincts' as well (Fromm: 1941, ch. 1). These two basic instincts form a drive-potential that, as a natural substratum, enters into every process of socialization; the shaping of the inner nature into historically-unique personality features takes place here in the medium of social interaction (Fromm: 1941, ch. 2).

With this fundamental change of direction Fromm severed his connections with the closed functionalism that had shaped his initial approach within social psychology; he now granted societal interaction not only a critical status in the process of socialization but moreover assigned it, albeit in the unfortunate form of theory of instincts, the role of a constitutive driving force in social development. True, Fromm retained the 'milieu-theoretic' orientation of his earlier investigations: that is, he continued to view personality development as primarily a 'dynamic conforming' of individual drive-potential to the behavioural imperatives that are admitted into the sociocultural milieux of different classes (see Bonss: 1982). However, because he now conceived the socialization operation as a whole as a process of communicative individualization, he was no longer able to assume that these social influences

and expectations are deposited in a completely uninterrupted manner in the individual personality structure; rather, the behavioural demands of society take effect only by means of and through a medium that, in accordance with its entire structure, is aimed at the autonomy of the subject. 54 In principle, ego development thus takes place in the dovetailing of increasing individualization and growing socialization.

At the institute it was above all Adorno and Marcuse who reacted to Fromm's new theoretical approach; of course, because of more personal reasons, they did not develop their critique until he had already left the institute (see Bonss: 1982, pp. 394ff; Jay: 1973, pp. 101ff). It was not so much the interactionistic elements in Fromm's new theory as its revisions of the theory of instincts that encountered opposition in the closer circle of the institute's members. Adorno and Marcuse perceived the abandonment of the Freudian theory of the libido as the common characteristic and traitorous core of neo-analytical revisionism; they saw here a theoretical accommodation of psychoanalysis to the purposes of a conformist therapy.<sup>55</sup> Against this tendency they argued for the orthodox content of the Freudian theory of instincts; although Adorno nevertheless referred primarily to the Freudian dualism of the sexual and death instincts, Marcuse linked up with the aesthetic-revolutionary potential of the libido theory in his interpretation of psychoanalysis.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the conflict concerning the importance and content of the Freudian libido theory became centrally significant for the relationship of psychoanalysis and critical theory; from the beginning, Fromm's new social-theoretical approach, the really fruitful core of his revision of psychoanalysis, receded behind this conflict. Interactionismthe interactionism which as a common orientation underlies neoanalytical revisionismwas never taken seriously as a theoretical challenge by either Adorno or Marcuse. The social-theoretical premisses of their own interpretations of psychoanalysis therefore remained concealed for a long time, and it is not until today that they have, through their problematic features, come to light.<sup>57</sup>

#### IV. Jürgen Habermas and Critical Theory

The research work of the 'outer circle', all of which could have contributed to an overcoming of Marxist functionalism, remained without influence on the further development of critical theory; the institute's research links with the three survivors of that circle, Neumann, Kirchheimer and Fromm, broke definitively after the Second World War. Of course Adorno and Horkheimer had long severed connections not only

with what were once some of their most productive associates, but also to a certain extent with their own past history. When the Institute for Social Research opened again in Frankfurt in 1950 it recommenced its research activity without any direct connection to the social-philosophical self-understanding of the thirties and forties. The unifying bond of a comprehensive theory that could have mediated between empirical research and philosophical reflection was broken in the post-war period. For that reason there was no longer an internal connection between the empirical studies conducted at the institute and the philosophical, cultural-critical research in which Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse (who remained in the United States) continued to pursue their original concerns. As a uniform, philosophically integrated school, critical theory was in ruins.

While a common denominator can scarcely be found for the empirical research projects of the institute, 58 the idea of a 'totally administered world' represents such a uniform point of reference, at least initially, for the social-philosophical works. As a theme, this idea runs through the cultural-critical studies of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, 59 where the central premisses of the state-capitalism thesis became the general frame of reference for an analysis of post-war capitalism. The totalitarian perspective, which had already shaped the conception of society in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, now also determined the sociological investigations: because administrative social control and individual willingness to conform interlock seamlessly, societal life came to be seen as integrated in a stable and unassailable system of constraint. Of course, from their largely concurring diagnosis of the present era, the three authors drew very different inferences for the project of a critical theory of society: in Horkheimer's thinking, a pessimism deriving from Schopenhauer which had accompanied him from the very beginning intensified to the point where it turned into a negative theology; 60 Adorno pressed ahead with a self-critique of conceptual thinking whose normative fixed point remained the idea of a mimetic rationality that is representatively preserved in the work of art; 61 only Marcuse reacted to the pessimistic diagnosis of the present era with an attempt to rescue the lost idea of revolution by pushing reason under the threshold of the social and shifting it into the libidinal nature of human needs (see Habermas: 1985).

Notwithstanding the differences in objectives, the background of a philosophy of history remained common to the three approaches a philosophy of history in which historical development is interpreted as a process of technical rationalization that comes to completion in the closed system of domination of contemporary society. The theory first

departing from the philosophical premisses of this diagnosis of the present era was at first hardly recognized as a new approach within critical theory. Although Jürgen Habermas was early on associated with the Institute for Social Research as Adorno's assistant, he had at first, in his theoretical origins and orientation, little in common with the philosophical tradition of critical theory. In his academic development, it was theoretical currents such as philosophical anthropology, hermeneutics, pragmatism and language analysis that gained recognition, theoretical currents which were always foreign to the older generation around Adorno and Horkheimer indeed the latter were hostile to these traditions of theory. Nevertheless, a theory has gradually emerged from Habermas's works which is so clearly motivated by the original objectives of critical theory that it may be accepted as the only serious new approach within this tradition today; the anti-functionalist impulses detected in the thinking of the marginal members of the institute have reached theoretical self-awareness in this theory and hence have become the frame of reference for a different conception of society.

The insight into the linguistic intersubjectivity of social action forms the foundation of this conception. Habermas reaches the fundamental premiss of his theory by way of a study of hermeneutic philosophy and of Wittgenstein's language analysis; from these he learns that human subjects are *ab initio*, that is, always already, united with one another through the medium of linguistic understanding (*sprachliche Verständigung*). The life-form of human beings distinguishes itself by an intersubjectivity anchored in the structures of language; therefore, for the reproduction of social life, linguistic understanding between subjects represents a fundamental, indeed the most basic, presupposition.

In his thinking, Habermas lends weight to this thesis since he makes it the point of departure of a debate with the social-philosophical and sociological tradition: thus, in contemporary social philosophy, he criticizes the tendency toward a gradual reduction of all political-practical matters to questions of technically appropriate decisions (see Habermas: 1968). Contrary to social scientific functionalism, he argues that the reproductive tasks of a society are always determined by the normative self-understanding of communicatively-socialized subjects and that vital functions as such are by no means always encountered in human life-contexts (Habermas: 1982a). In this way he is ultimately led to a critique of Marxism that results in an 'action-theoretically extended' conception of history: if the human life-form distinguishes itself by the medium of linguistic understanding then societal reproduction cannot be reduced to the single dimension of labour as propounded by Marx in his theoretical writings. Rather, in addition to the activity of processing

nature, the practice of linguistically mediated interaction must be viewed as an equally fundamental dimension of historical development (Habermas: 1972, parts 13, pp. 25ff.).

With this consideration Habermas has already implicitly broken with the basic assumptions of the philosophy of history that were thus far determining for the tradition of critical theory. 62 He no longer sees, as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse continued to do, the characteristic feature of human socialization in the continually expanding process of transforming nature, but rather in the fact that the collective securing of material existence is dependent, from the very beginning, on the simultaneous maintenance of a communicative agreement. Because human beings by nature are only able to form a personal identity as long as they can grow and move within the intersubjectively shared world of a social group, the interruption of the process of communicative understanding would violate a presupposition of human survival which is just as fundamental as that of the collective appropriation of nature. Linguistic communication is the medium in which individuals can secure that mutuality in their action-orientations and conceptions of value which is necessary in order that the tasks of material reproduction can be societally mastered. However, the philosophy of history that had served critical theory as a theoretical system of reference abstracts from this dimension of social interaction; it was because of this abstraction that critical theory fell into the illusion of a Marxist functionalism in which all societal phenomena are considered in terms of the function they fulfill in the human transformation of nature.

To be sure, the decisive step that Habermas has taken in the direction of his own theory of society and thereby toward a new formulation of critical theory arises first by way of connecting the two action concepts, 'labour' and 'interaction', with different categories of rationality. This step, rich in potential, results from Habermas's interest in incorporating the new distinction between two types of action into a theory of societal rationalization. A discussion of Marcuse's critique of technology provides the immediate occasion for this; Max Weber's concept of rationality, however, provides the theoretical framework (Habermas: 1971). Habermas conceives the two kinds of action distinguished in his critique of Marx not only as the pattern of specific forms of activity but also as the framework for particular cognitive performances; to this extent, both fundamental dimensions of societal reproduction, 'labour' and 'interaction', must each be distinguished by an independent form of knowledge production and an independent form of 'rationality'. However, Weber's concept of rationalization then proves itself to be too narrow: because, just as specific forms of ratio-



nality can be claimed for instrumental activities and technical knowledge, possibilities of rationalization must also be able to be shown for communicative practice and the knowledge embedded in it. Habermas summarizes the general thesis resulting from this critique of Weber in a conceptual framework borrowed from systems theory: although the species develops further by way of the accumulation of technical and strategic knowledge in the subsystems of purposive-rational action in which the tasks of societal labour and political administration are organized, it also continues to develop by way of liberation from forces which impede communication within the institutional framework in which the socially integrating norms are reproduced (Habermas: 1971, esp. pp. 92ff.).

All Habermas's extension of his theory in the course of the seventies have followed the lines of this concept of society in which purposive-rationality organized action-systems are distinguished from a sphere of communicative everyday practice, with separate forms of rationalization being claimed for both social realms. Here, universal pragmatics serves further to clarify the linguistic infrastructure of communicative action (Habermas: 1979b); a theory of social evolution helps clarify the logic of development of societal knowledge and thereby the process of rationalization in both its forms; 63 and, finally, with the further reception of systems-theoretic conceptions, Habermas seeks to determine the mechanisms by which realms of social action become independent purposive-rationally organized systems (Habermas: 1982b).

Although these theoretical endeavours penetrate into the most diverging areas of science, nevertheless they are all aimed at the same objective, that is, the communications-theoretic foundation of a critical theory of society. With their help Habermas seeks to prove that the rationality of communicative action is such a fundamental presupposition of societal development that the tendencies toward an instrumental reification diagnosed by Adorno and Horkheimer can be criticized as forms of societal rationalization that are one-sided, that is, organized solely in a purposive-rational manner. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*,<sup>64</sup> which Habermas published in two volumes in 1981 (Habermas: 1984, 1987a), this programme assumes a systematic form for the first time. The results of the different research projects are brought together here to form a single theory in which the rationality of communicative action is reconstructed within the framework of a theory of speech acts; it is also further developed working through the history of sociological theory from Weber to Parsons in order to lay the foundations of a theory of society; and, finally, it is made the point of reference for a critical diagnosis of the contemporary world.



In Habermas's theory, the concept of communicative rationality assumes the same key position which the concept of instrumental rationality held in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Just as Adorno and Horkheimer developed the developmental dynamic of a historical process in which the present is comprehended as being in a state of crisis from the form of rationality emerging through the mastery of nature, Habermas does so from the rationality potential of communicative action. The basic outline of his construction is that culturally invariant validity claims are stored in the communicative speech acts through which individual actions are coordinated, and that these are historically differentiated gradually in the course of a process of cognitive rationalization. By virtue of the decentering of knowledge embedded in the life world, which had acted as an encompassing horizon for all communicative action, a cognitive orientation finally separates as a single point of view in which subjects relate to their environment solely from the perspective of success.

Habermas sees within such a historically derived ability to act strategically the social presupposition for the emergence of systemically organized spheres of action. As subjects learn to act in a manner oriented purely toward success, there emerges the possibility of coordinating social actions through non-linguistic media such as money or power, rather than through processes of reaching understanding. The two spheres of action, which are detached from the communicative lifeworld because of the institutionalization of these steering media, are the domains of economic production and political administration. The economic system and the action sphere of the state are integrated from now on without recourse to the process of communicative understanding. In modern societies they stand, as systems regulated in a manner free of norms, opposite those spheres of action which continue to be communicatively organized and in which the symbolic reproduction of social life proceeds.

On the basis of the historical decoupling of 'system' and 'lifeworld' Habermas justifies the introduction of the two-level concept of society, to which his construction leads. Here the process of communicative understanding is viewed also as the fundamental reproductive mechanism of modern societies but at the same time, the existence of such norm-free spheres of action accessible only by way of a systems-theoretic analysis presupposed as a historical product. Thus the interweaving of a theory of communication and a concept of system proves to be the essential component for a sociological theory of modernity: every analysis of those processes of reaching understanding by means of which societies today reproduce themselves in their founda-

tions in the life world requires the aid of systems analysis to investigate the systemic forms of material reproduction. Finally, from this dualistic construction Habermas derives the framework within which he attempts to develop his diagnosis of modernity; its central motive springs from the intention to interpret the process of the 'dialectic of enlightenment' in such a manner that the pessimistic conclusions to which Adorno and Horkheimer were forced can be avoided. The developed theory of society provides the discursive means for this, for, in light of this theory, the systemically-independent organizational complexes in which Adorno and Horkheimer could only see the final stage of a logic of the mastery of nature now prove to be the social products of a rationalization of the social life-world. It is not now the existence of purposive-rational organizational forms as such in social life that appears as a crisis-ridden tendency of the present, but just their incursion into that inner domain of society that is constitutively dependent on processes of communicative understanding. To this phenomenon of a 'colonization of the social lifeworld' Habermas thus attaches his own diagnosis of a pathology of modernity: 'the rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible an increase in systems complexity which enlarges to such an extent that the released systemic imperatives outstrip the comprehension ability of the lifeworld which is instrumentalized by them' (Habermas: 1987a, chap. VI, section 2).

It is not difficult to see that the reasoning of this diagnosis of modernity is fully dependent on the two-level model of society the point to which Habermas has developed his communications-theoretic approach. Only because he sees modern societies divided into system and lifeworld, into purposive-rationally-organized functional contexts and communicatively-constituted spheres of action, can he understand the incursion of systemic forms of steering into the hitherto intact domains of a communicative everyday practice as the determining pathology of our times.

However, it is precisely the distinction between system and lifeworld which has recently met with opposition; with this distinction Habermas is in danger of yielding to the 'seductions of systems theory' and of again surrendering the actual potential of his communications-theoretic approach. 66 The outcome of the discussion sparked off by this problem will determine the future of critical theory. This discussion will have to tackle the question of how the communications-theoretic turn by means of which Habermas has overcome the instrumentalistic bottlenecks of the critical theory tradition is to be developed further in a suitable theory of society. It may be that in the course of the discussion Neumann's, Kirchheimer's and Benjamin's sociological insights, which

were not widely read at the time, can at last provide their theoretical potential for critical theory. It may well be that the theory of political compromise as well as Benjamin's concept of collective experience acquire the moment they become components of a communicative theory of society a systematic significance opposed to the dualism of system and lifeworld. The turn towards communication in critical theory thus might allow a recovery of a neglected aspect of its past.

# Chapter 5

## From Adorno to Habermas:

### On the Transformation of Critical Social Theory 1

A historian of the "Frankfurt School" reported that Habermas reacted to Adorno's death with a confession of methodological uncertainty: Adorno's 'theoretical veil', he said, no longer covers the methodological framework of critical social theory.<sup>2</sup> The statement was presented at that time with the cynicism characteristic of academic journalism: in a carefully framed context a pupil commenting upon the death of his philosophical mentor with theoretical reflection the very discontinuities in a history of theory were turned into a biographical event. Should we distinguish between Habermas's statement and its journalistic dramatization, though, we can recognize that it points to a thoroughly systemic problem complex: the theoretical shift in critical theory from Adorno to Habermas. Not only their sharply diverging forms of representation but also, and more importantly, their indebtedness to contending theoretical traditions indicate here an argumentative transition in critical theory that suggests comparisons with a rupture in a tradition or with a paradigm shift. To date these theoretical shifts have hardly received systematic consideration: compared to the international proliferation of works concerning the continuity of the Frank-

Frankfurt School tradition, there are only a very few inquiries which examine at greater length than a footnote the turn in this tradition that Habermas has introduced. 3 The theoretical avenues traversed by critical theory in passing from the early critical philosophy, shaped by the fascist experience, to Habermas's social theory, remain thus far unexplored. On the other hand, until the publication of his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas tended to shy away from any explicit discussion of critical theory that might have made apparent his relation to the Frankfurt School tradition. In the scattered writings that, from the perspective of the history of philosophy, address the classical texts of critical theory,<sup>4</sup> it is difficult at first glance to detect any consistent argumentative pattern. Written largely in response to formal occasions of the academic system, these essays act neither in the capacity of a conclusive critique nor with the intent to interpretively identify the different versions of the Frankfurt tradition.

Thus has it largely escaped notice that in the form worked out by Habermas, critical theory has been detached from the classical thematic core of the "Frankfurt School" and has developed its own argumentative perspective. Habermas's version of critical social theory no longer argues exclusively within the tradition of Hegelian philosophy and left-Hegelian criticism, but is rather systematically oriented around the theoretical self-examination of more recent contributions, themselves theoretically informed by the so-called 'linguistic turn'. No longer merely pursuing the critique of ideology, but rather hoping for theoretical advance, critical theory has now engaged itself with the classical tradition of sociology. It shall be the thesis of this essay that Adorno's philosophy occupies a central position in this history of a theoretical reorientation, this reorientation itself being but the manifest result of a fundamental transformation in the conception of critical theory. Habermas encounters in Adorno's conception of critical theory a complex of arguments which, as a result of the overwhelming historical experience of fascism and Stalinism, self-critically drew back from the stronger theoretical claims of the Frankfurt School tradition.<sup>5</sup> Adorno believes critical theory capable neither of providing practical guidance for a revolutionary social movement nor of assuming the role of a representative for a rationality that is simultaneously embodied in and repressed in history. In what would seem rather to be a careful examination of this critical theory of resignation, Habermas undertakes initial epistemological and categorical steps toward a conceptual reorientation of critical social theory that in the post-fascist historical situation is supposed to recover its original claims. The guiding question of Habermas's

encounter with 'critical theory' is how it can throw off its defensive posture without taking theoretical recourse to the supposition, so central to the early formulation, of a proletarian mass movement. 6 The theoretical steps that should make the solution of this problem possible can be reconstructed from his hidden critique of Adorno's philosophy. They establish the argumentative framework from out of which Habermas can construe critical theory as a theory of social communication.

Adorno interprets fascism as the culmination point of a universal-historical process of reification. Should critical theory maintain its claim to historical reflexivity even in consideration of this historical experience, so will it become a theory from "out of the fascist present, in which what is hidden comes to light."<sup>7</sup> In the post-fascist period of reconstruction, as well, Adorno is certain of this historical constellation, in which the rational form of fascist domination first makes clear that the logic of historical development is one of increasing reification. As diverse as the argumentative threads of Adorno's philosophy may be, they all remain embedded in an historical-philosophical theory which, within its construction of history, treats the substantive historical experience of fascism as "regressive Anthropogenesis".<sup>8</sup>

This construction of history adopts a critical attitude toward the two relevant versions of historical materialism. In opposition to the orthodox conception, which in following the example of theories of evolutionary progress systematizes the process of history according to the standard of growth in the forces of production, Adorno advances the following thesis: the cumulative progress in the development of rational domination over nature at the same time extends the complex of reification [*Verdinglichungszusammenhang*] under which the socialization of external as well as internal nature are equally oppressively organized. In opposition to the left-Hegelian conception of historical materialism, which interprets history as the formative process of a proletarian social movement which itself achieves in Marxism its theoretical self-consciousness, Adorno's construction of history maintains the universality of the system of reification: the process of historical development can now be systematized only as the formation of the instrumental rationality of oppression. Thus with this construction of history Adorno's philosophy must also finally give up the theoretical status, to which the left-Hegelian conception of historical materialism had laid claim, as the form of theoretical reflection of a practical social movement. Against this theoretical conception of critical Marxism Adorno advances the case for a process of theory formation detached from the context of political interests, which can nonetheless preserve the Marxist theoretical claim to social-historical reflexivity not through any connection with practical

politics, but solely with the aim of establishing a theoretical representation of noninstrumentally constituted forms of consciousness. According to Adorno this must be the case because the emancipatory formative process, as the theoretical self-consciousness of which the critical Marxism of Korsch or Lukács still wanted to be understood, is itself caught up in the universal process of rationalization, which only a few diffuse forms of consciousness themselves not amenable to procedures of mass education have been able to withstand.

With Adorno's philosophy the tradition of critical social philosophy changes into the pessimistic self-enlightenment of critical theory. To its historical-philosophical interpretation of late capitalism as the social form of total reification, there remain only the figures of a theory of reflective-mimetic works of art and a philosophical critique of false totality. 9 Since Marx's theoretical conception of class consciousness of social unfreedom has lost its viability as a consequence of the administration of mass consciousness by the culture industry, it is authentic works of art and conceptually critical philosophy alone that embody modes of consciousness that escape the social compulsion of the logic of identity. Through its reflective-mimetic procedures the work of art lays claim to a form of experience that does not submit to the dominance of the conceptual and, thus, oppressive appropriation of reality. 10 Within the medium of conceptual thinking, philosophical critique can still identify the logic of domination infusing this very thinking. 11 Aesthetic theory and negative dialectics thus represent the truth-content of converging (or helplessly mutually referential 12 ) theoretical forms belonging to a weakened conception of critical social philosophy. In the reconstruction of its own constitutive historical context, this philosophy can only comprehend the thoroughgoing reification of bourgeois society as the totalization of the instrumental rationality grounded in the principle of commodity exchange.

In Adorno's philosophy, critical theory retracts its strong theoretical claims from both directions. Though continuing to regard itself as a form of theory generated by a specific set of historical circumstances, it no longer continues to claim, in the manner typical of critical Marxism, to be the theoretical self-consciousness of an emancipatory social movement. 13 Adorno's theory is too strongly defined by the experience of history as an orderly series of catastrophes [*Katastrophenzusammenhang*] to have any confidence in the idea of a dimension of historical progress that might explode total reification. In the second place, however, critical theory must thereby necessarily give up any claim to a theory-immanent orientation toward struggles for political realization. A socio-structurally identifiable theoretical addressee remains unimagin-

able in Adorno's historical experience of late capitalist social systems. The Marxist idea of a massive and self-organizing social movement gives way to the idea of an experience of oppression which can only be formulated or given shape by individuals.

Now the cautious criticism which places Habermas's theory in relation to this weakening of critical theory, itself motivated by Adorno's philosophy of history, can first be discerned in just those places where he would appear to take only an affirmative attitude toward Adorno's thoughts. Habermas consistently recurs to two of Adorno's basic philosophical assumptions. In the context of an interpretation of Marx's early writings, Habermas developed his concept of the practical self-realization of philosophy, and therewith the idea of the reflexivity of materialist theory, using the categories of Adorno's critique of foundational philosophy [*Ursprungsphilosophie*]. On the other hand, he developed his conception of dialectic as the reconstruction of those elements systematically repressed through the power relations operative in communication in the context of Adorno's interpretation of Hegel. 14 From the first of these thoughts Habermas derives a philosophically and historically more precise figure of historically self-conscious theory. From the second of these argumentative complexes he extracts the theme of an historical reconstruction directed toward split off and repressed meanings. Habermas bestows upon these ideas that he has taken over, however, a meaning that is detached from Adorno's fundamental intention. The philosophical-historical clamp connecting the two argumentative complexes of Adorno's philosophy to the critical idea of a regressive cultural development finds no place in Habermas's theoretical premises.

According to his interpretation, then, Adorno's critique of foundational philosophy is "based on the insight that philosophy qua philosophy must do without self-justification and self-realization, so that qua unity of theory and practice it can achieve both."<sup>15</sup> This interpretation is permissible enough with regard to the isolated theorem, but disregards the point of Adorno's critique, which arises out of its philosophical-historical context: for him, we recall, critical philosophy can approach past philosophical systems only with the consciousness of their present irreconcilability which is, in turn, rooted historically in the regressive development of culture. Adorno's critique of foundational philosophy reflects the historical inadequacy of its own standards.<sup>16</sup> Habermas's arguments, however, are addressing precisely the question of the historical and theoretical conditions for the possibility of the claims brought to bear by critical theory in its critique of foundational philosophy. Though



appropriating Adorno's reflections, they aim nonetheless at the claim to practical realization of critical social philosophy the same claim which Adorno himself, through his insistence upon the autonomy of philosophy, had already pessimistically retracted.

Habermas abstracts Adorno's theorems from their philosophical-historical framework in a comparable manner when he uses the latter's critique of Hegel to develop his own conception of dialectic. Adorno's interpretation of Hegel is lead by the critical ideological tension, posited by his guiding philosophical-historical idea of a rationality of domination that universally establishes itself in history, between the historical truth and the theoretical falsity of Hegel's philosophy. Habermas's critique of Hegel, on the other hand, takes as its critical focus the monological construction of the concept of absolute spirit. Adorno thus initially retains the cynical truth of Hegel's system, that in the doctrine of absolute spirit the history of human consciousness has been correctly conceived as the process of the unfolding and establishment of a totalitarian reason, in order then, with the left-Hegelian tradition, to oppose the systemic claims by taking into account the facticity of the particular. 17 Habermas's interpretation, by contrast, critically plays the philosophy of intersubjectivity found in Hegel's early writings against the mature systemic philosophy. 18 Thus even in the modes of interpretation adopted with regard to Hegel there gapes a difference between Habermas and Adorno too great to be glossed over still by Habermas's return to just one theme of Adorno's interpretation of Hegel. Adorno's interpretive approach obtains its rigor from a critique of ideology that can consider a philosophical-historically developed concept of rationality both theoretically with Hegel as well as critically against Hegel. In contrast, Habermas's interpretation obtains its rigor from a theoretical critique that advocates the idea of a fundamental intersubjectivity in opposition to a conception of the history of consciousness constructed on the model of an isolated self-consciousness. The two interpretive approaches mutually exclude one another. Against Hegel Adorno is unable to offer precisely any model of intersubjectively constituted rationality, since his philosophy of history has no systemic space for this form of rationality. On the other hand, Habermas cannot reconcile the history of human consciousness with that of absolute spirit, since his basic philosophical-historical assumptions conceptualize the history of human consciousness differently. The idea of an universal historical complex of reification which guides Adorno's philosophy is closed out of Habermas's theory from its earliest formulations. To be sure, it takes up the critical theme in Adorno's philosophy of an historically oriented

hermeneutic of the repressed, but the latter's guiding philosophical-historical perspective finds itself in opposition to a conception of history which is in its basic concepts differently constructed.

Both examples show that Habermas can systematically lay claim to Adorno's theses only by overlooking their philosophical-historical context. The critique of foundational philosophy, which forms a continuous theme through all of Adorno's major works, is treated by Habermas as the philosophical underpinning of Marx's claim concerning the realization of critical theory, but without mentioning in this interpretive context Adorno's philosophical-historical relativization of this practical goal. With regard to Adorno's interpretation of Hegel he underlines the depth-hermeneutic dimension of the concept of dialectic without, however, coming to terms with the philosophical-historical emphasis of this interpretation. Both interpretive approaches mark less a systematic inheritance of Adorno's theoretical intent as Habermas's theoretically grounded mistrust regarding the guiding philosophical-historical idea that for Adorno connects these theoretical themes into a unified philosophy. As these differences show, Habermas does not adhere to the historically and philosophically weakened conception of critical theory. He connects a different theoretical intent to the critique of traditional forms of theory and to the interpretation of Hegel than does Adorno, with his skeptical critique of foundational philosophy and his ideological-critical interpretation of Hegel. Whereas Adorno's philosophy gives up the classical claims of critical theory, since it can no longer identify an historical form of rationality both amenable to political organization and immune to the pressure of reification, Habermas's theory undertakes the project of an epistemological and social-historicaland, later, evolutionaryreconstruction of a dimension of rationality that, cutting through the complex of reification, would reactivate the self-imposed claims withdrawn by critical social theory during its period of critical self-reflection.

These fundamental differences of intent can now, however, first be examined systematically on the basis of the categorical distinctions that Habermas introduces into Adorno's basic philosophical-historical conception of 'rationality'. By means of this conceptual distinction Habermas clears a path through Adorno's critique of the philosophy of history for his own approach to the reconstruction of Marxist theory which breaks with the philosophical context inherited by critical social theory. I would like to explore this critique, which rests upon a changed social-historical context of experience, in three steps: I take as my starting point (I) that the difference in the conceptual framework constructed around the basic philosophical-historical assumptions brings

with it (II) a difference in the form of representation and the principle of argumentation in critical theory as well as (III) a difference in the theoretical space opened up in relation to praxis.

# I

The basic conception by means of which Adorno, together with Horkheimer, draws together the philosophical-historical experience of total reification in bourgeois society is that of locating the logic of identity at the foundation of rationality. The philosophical-historical generalization of the critique of political economy carried out in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* reconstructs the history of civilization in terms of the ascension of an instrumental and dominating reason. The emancipation through civilization from the threat represented by the overwhelming power of external nature can succeed only through the development of a rationality that removes natural complexes from the interpretive region of interaction, objectifies them on the basis of formal-logical operations and thus first places them at our technical disposal. This transformation of [*Bearbeitung*] nature is brought about at the cost of closing off all communicative sensibility. The instrumental rationality which has thus been formed under the imperatives of social reproduction also, however, makes its way into the experimental relations of social action so that the socialization of inner nature is increasingly distorted into mimicking the pattern of technical mastery over nature. The desocialization of nature is accompanied necessarily by the desocialization of society. 19 Against this conceptually organized rationality which bears the process of reification, then, critical theory can only muster up as an alternative synthesis the reactivated form of mimetic knowledge found in works of art. The monopoly of conceptual knowledge is first broken in aesthetic perception, and the particular, which cannot be assimilated to the relevant lawful relations of natural- or social-technical theory, is thereby again made accessible.20

Different theoretical motives come together in these basic philosophical-historical assumptions. First of all they can be interpreted as a Marxist philosophy of history, built around the basic category of 'instrumental rationality' and carried out as a history of consciousness, which represents a theoretical reaction to the scientistic interpretation of Marxism worked out in the Second International.21 Against the evolutionarily-oriented conception of a neutral development of productive forces, on the historical axis of which the progress of humankind was supposed to be determinable, critical theory reflects upon

the desocializing structure of the rationality embedded in the productive forces. The principle thesis which in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is directed against the Marxist conception of progress thus proposes that it is precisely within the emancipation from nature brought about by civilization that the promise of social emancipation is robbed of any possibility for fulfillment.

Epistemologically, the critique of instrumental reason can be construed as an extension of the Marxist analysis of commodity production. The abstract reality of commodity exchange uncovered by the critique of political economy provides for Adorno the model, if not the basis of explanation, for the universally widespread form of abstractive rationality. 22 Adorno's reflections here, though, cannot simply be reduced to a unified theoretical conception of bourgeois forms of thought which proceeds on the basis of the analysis of exchange.23 Adorno's philosophical-historical conception reflects changes in the organization of the political relations of capitalist societies which have taken place since Marx's time. Whereas the Marxist theory was informed by the pretheoretical experiences of a work force revolutionized by its location within system-exposing crisis situations, the emancipatory fruitlessness of this revolution, understood as the failure of the West European workers' movement, along with the Stalinization of Soviet politics, make up the central experiential subtext of Adorno's theory.24 Thus while Marx counted politically upon the revolutionary formative moment of capitalist production, Adorno, once he makes fascism into the provisional culminating point of all history, globally subsumes processes of rationalization under the negative process of total reification. In opposition to this universal process of reification, the analysis of which provides the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with an occasion to remind us of the structural similarity between myth and instrumental rationality, critical theory can no longer appeal to systematic formative and emancipatory moments within capitalist production, but instead must locate the conditions for successful emancipation more deeply, namely, prior to all forms of historically developed rationality. Thus the critique of instrumental reason is, in the end, also informed systematically by the normative presumption that the condition of a society liberated in an emphatic sense can be understood only in terms of the dissolution of the reason which reifies relations of nature and society, understood as a "mindfulness of nature" [*Eingedenken der Natur*].25 If the objectifying grasp of natural complexes itself already brings about the oppressive malformation of communicative relations, then first a state of aesthetic cooperation with nature would allow the domination-free encounter with inner nature.

The guiding critical idea of Adorno's philosophy of history thus remained the theme of a "reconciliation with nature." Habermas mistrusts the normative claim underlying this conception of reconciliation. His theoretical skepticism rests upon the suspicion that the conception of an aesthetic-communicative interaction with nature inappropriately expands the model of social interaction to include natural complexes and thus normatively overburdens it. If the substantive normative core of the idea of reconciliation derives its critical power solely from a theoretically untenable and originally theologically motivated anticipation, then certainly the standards for an authentically rational society which made their way into Adorno's philosophy of history would also prove to be problematic.

Habermas brought reservations of this sort to bear against different versions of the idea of reconciliation.<sup>26</sup> They have as their basis his conceptual refinement of the category of rationality. From the very outset Habermas opposed to Adorno's concept of rationality, structured around the philosophy of consciousness, a more differentiated action-theoretic notion of rationality. He here takes his lead from the central theoretical theme of a pragmatic orientation in the philosophy of language and in the philosophy of science. Following Wittgenstein, the former conceives of natural languages as systems of rules embedded in structures of action, and the latter, following Pierce, derives the norms of scientific research from patterns of pre-scientific forms of action.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, Habermas seeks to demonstrate the structural relation between forms of rationality and types of action. He thereby moves the concept of 'rationality', taken from the tradition of critical theory, into the theoretical context of social action: 'rationality', in the critical sense of the Frankfurt theoretical tradition as well, can be interpreted as the objective form of processes of social action.<sup>28</sup>

With this pragmatic interpretation Habermas has first of all radicalized one of Adorno's more ambivalent reflections. The latter's philosophy of history does conceive the specific form of instrumental rationality as being, as it were, the objectified result of a process of action directed toward achieving practical control over nature. But at the same time it treats this form of rationality as being analogous to the abstractive structure of action characteristic of commodity exchange.<sup>29</sup> Habermas gives up this epistemological ambivalence in favor of a pragmatic interpretation of instrumental reason. The form of technical rationality criticized by Adorno against the normative background of the idea of reconciliation is interpreted by Habermas solely as a linguistically fixed and generalized objective form of the operations of instrumental action. At the same time, however, Habermas assumes that on

the level of species-historically necessary and thus culturally invariant dimensions of action in which the formation of human reason is supposed to be embedded, there exists next to social labor, the only mode of action acknowledged by critical theory, yet a second, equiprimordial mode of action, namely, communicative action. Contrary to the tradition of the Frankfurt School, Habermas's critical theory entails in its philosophical-historical basic categories two types of historically constitutive action. From the patterns of pre-scientific object constitution which are structurally articulated within the two modes of action 'work' and 'interaction', he can derive not only an instrumental but, additionally, an interactive form of rationality. Whereas the socio-cultural course of rationalization in relation to nature must follow the pattern established within the action context of social labor and directed toward achieving technical control, the course of rationalization within society follows the pattern established within the action context of social interaction and directed toward achieving intersubjective understanding.

On the basis of this categorical differentiation Habermas is now able to grasp Adorno's concept of rationality as an inadmissible conflation of two different socio-historical dimensions of rationality. Adorno's philosophical-historically oriented critique of a technical rationality which overlooks the particular only succeeds because he measures the abstractive mode of knowledge developed through work upon nature against the norm of a mode of knowledge characteristic of symbolically structured social relations. From the perspective of Habermas's conceptual development, then, Adorno's philosophy ignores species-historical relations of reproduction by assuming that the rationality of collective work upon nature could also adhere to the pattern of interaction in which subjects form their identity through becoming aware of just their non-identity. That is to say, it assumes that the form of knowledge underlying social production could thus simply put aside the logic of identity, which to this time possessed the status of a structural characteristic, and take on the openness of a conceptually unfixed interpretation of nature. Against Adorno Habermas raises the following objection: "It is obvious, however, that for the sake of removing socially unnecessary repression we cannot do without the exploitation of external nature necessary for life. The concept of a categorically different science and technology is as empty as the idea of reconciliation is groundless." 30 If, that is, the structure of knowledge characteristic of instrumental rationality is based in the action operations of social labor, but the appropriation of external nature by means of socially organized work constitutes a universal prerequisite for social reproduction, then a critique of instrumental reason based on the norm of interpersonal ex-

perience lacks an object: it criticizes in technical rationality just that conceptual objectification made necessary by the culturally invariant imperative for reproduction through work upon nature. 31

From this perspective the alternative conception of 'aesthetic rationality', central for Adorno's philosophy, loses its critical power, since the condition of a liberated society can no longer be described as a domination-free interaction with nature, but rather must be grounded in the two mutually isolated dimensions of rationality: the appropriation of nature and social interaction. Against Adorno's philosophical-historical 'monism',<sup>32</sup> Habermas originally sought to develop a categorically transformed concept of history on the basis of the two complementary projects of an anthropologically oriented theory of human-specific forms of action and a pragmatically oriented theory of knowledge directed toward action-specific modes of experience.<sup>33</sup> This theoretical turn established the initial conditions of his theory. The perspective from which Habermas reconstructs the conditions of oppression within the species-historical process of civilization is no longer bound solely to the concept of one mode of rationality mediating between society and nature, but rather entails two modes of rationality following the separate courses traced respectively by the socialization of inner and outer nature.

Adorno interpreted history systematically as the ongoing realization of the domination of instrumental rationality, against which philosophy had the task of preserving the discontinuous moments of substantive experience, that is, experience not yet distorted by concepts. Habermas, on the other hand, treats history as a process wherein structures of both communicative and instrumental rationality unfold, so that as a consequence the scientific critique of a purposive rationality that has established its own independence [*Verselbständigung von Zweckrationalität*] nonetheless systematically takes into account the continuity of linguistically constituted intersubjectivity. Though a 'hermeneutic of the repressed' is to be found in both theories alike, the objects of this hermeneutic are specific to each approach: out of the evidence testifying to the process of reification Adorno reconstructs the fragments of a non-abstractive mode of consciousness;<sup>34</sup> by contrast Habermas reaches through immediate [*Naturwüchsig*] social processes to underlying structures constitutive of human intersubjectivity. "Only when philosophy discovers in the dialectical course of history the traces of violence that deform repeated attempts at dialogue and recurrently close off the path to unconstrained communication does it further the process whose suspension it otherwise legitimates: mankind's evolution toward autonomy and responsibility."<sup>35</sup> The constellation of 'violence' and



'communication', which Habermas here establishes as the foundational principle of critical social theory, replaces the categories 'reason' and 'nature', within the boundaries of which Adorno's philosophy of history still construes the fundamental conceptual relations of critical theory. The decisive significance that this categorical transition takes on for both theories can be further traced in terms of their different forms of representation.

## II

Adorno's philosophy is informed by the philosophical-historical thesis of cultural regression. This thesis entails the fundamental presupposition of a universal-historical growth of reification, and the very form of representation of his philosophy reflects that perspective. Just as Adorno's aesthetic theory insists in opposition to every formal aesthetic that the form of artistic work can only be grasped as an 'historically sedimented content', 36 so must his philosophy, to be consistent with this idea, also place the form of theoretical work in relation to the historical situation of civilization. If, then, a theory's form of representation can be interpreted in this manner as an organization of the content of knowledge which has been shaped by its specific historical situation, then a theory conceived as a critique must also in its very form extract itself from the problematic context of prior history. Adorno's philosophy thus sets its very form in opposition to the rational principles of abstract logic. His philosophical-historical premisses compel a frontal attack upon the methodical organization of theoretical understanding in general.

The article entitled "Der Essay als Form" offers reflections which develop these ideas more fully and offer positive determinations for Adorno's sustained pursuit of an anti-systematic and non-methodical approach to theory construction. Prior to all scientific theorizing, the "Essay" is supposed to lay claim to a form of representation which a critical theory informed by the lessons of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can take as its model. The form of representation of this essay represents for Adorno "critical theory par excellence."<sup>37</sup> In opposition to Descartes' reflections on method, against the background of which Horkheimer had already established the idea of a critical theory, Adorno's discussion in the "Essay" develops a methodically fragmented, non-discursive stance toward argumentation which stands diametrically opposed to the founding figure of scientific demonstration. Whereas Horkheimer confronts Descartes' conception of theory with that of a



partisan theory practically informed by its social context, Descartes' idea of method serves Adorno above all as the negative contrasting figure of a traditional form of theory: its guiding principle of an entirely deductive (or inductive) grounding merely extends the logic of domination inhering in the appropriation of nature into even the scientific framing of the object. In contrast, the "Essay" dispenses with the imperatives of scientific procedure in favor of an uncoerced reflection upon methodically unstructured material. From the tension between identifying conceptuality, hermeneutically disclosed meaning and individual experience there arises in the "Essay" a mode of argumentation which does not methodically suffocate its object, but rather interprets it from within. From the form of representation of the "Essay" Adorno gathers the "idea of the happiness of freedom in relation to the object, in which it discloses more of itself than if it were ruthlessly incorporated into the order of ideas." 38 It is from this idea of argumentative non-violence that a critical theory must take its beginning. It must aim in its formal construction to evade the philosophical-historically identified coercion of instrumental rationality. Philosophical thought must make the "non-violent glimpse of the object," which is supposed to emerge in the "Essay," into its own reflective attitude, if it does not wish merely to remain within the oppressive grasp of the logic of identity.<sup>39</sup>

With this conclusion Adorno brings the form of representation of his critical theory into line with precisely those moments of an aesthetic mode of experience in the mimetic rationality of which alone his philosophy still finds normative support. With Adorno critical theory assumes an argumentative position that gives up the traditional commitment to the methodological norm in favor of a more subjective content to knowledge and of descriptive sensibility. Its argumentative ideal is derived from the mimetic achievement of the work of art, not from the principle of demonstration characteristic of the modern sciences. The form of representation chosen for critical theory by Adorno thus remains oriented toward the philosophical-historical categories of 'nature' and 'reason': the decentralized theory construction, the argumentative employment of individual experience, and the methodical fragmentation of his philosophy are legitimated by an interpretation of history which reconstructs oppressive social relations out of the structures of a reason oriented toward the domination of nature.

The mode of representation of Habermas's theory, in contrast, is reflected not in a philosophical-historically motivated opposition to the domination of rationality, but rather in connection with communication that has been forcibly repressed during the process of civilization. In his

case the form of critical theory follows the idea of an interaction free of domination in that its principle of construction coincides with a mode of self-reflection that is immanently situated and committed solely to the non-violent force of arguments. Thus in Habermas's theory as well the form of representation is not external to its fundamental theoretical and historical presuppositions. Only in this case the relation must be deduced from the theory's argumentative attitude, since it does not specifically thematize its own form of representation.

In breaking away from Adorno's philosophical-historical premisses, Habermas has so transformed the conceptual framework of critical social theory that it can now no longer be established solely in opposition to the oppressive rationality of social production, but rather at the same time must be grounded in the communicative rationality entailed in the socialization of inner nature. Thus the cultural constellation within which Habermas must situate the form of representation of critical theory is no longer provided by the guiding idea of a totalizing purposive rationality, but rather by the theoretical-historical supposition of two dimensions in the history of human consciousness. The strong formal standards of Adorno's philosophy are a result of the normative idea of a domination-free, quasi-mimetic appropriation of the object. Since social emancipation succeeds only through liberation from a rationality which conceptually reifies natural and social complexes to an equal extent, a critical theory which satisfies its demands must also proceed in relation to its theoretical object according to the model of a domination-free 'mindfulness' [*eingedenken*].

For Habermas, however, this self-imposed demand of critical theory already loses its power principally because he grounds the conceptual structure of a positivistically interpreted natural scientific reason by means of a critique of knowledge. Since within the framework of his theory the forms of scientific rationality are thought to be explained in terms of universal-historical structures of action, the objective methodical and conceptual achievements of instrumental reason attain a validity limited to scientifically rationalized social production. Habermas is in this manner able to absorb the global imperative to non-domination in the theoretical relation to reality, on the basis of which Adorno justified the argumentative style of critical theory, into the methodologies of action specific modes of theory. Habermas thus shifts the question from one, typical of Adorno's philosophy, concerning the mode of theory appropriate for a given stage of historical development to the epistemological question concerning a methodology adequate for critical theory. 40 His own basic conception, namely, can again pose the question regarding the problem of a theory-specific

method because it must no longer secure the appropriate form of representation against the methodical organization of knowledge contents in general, but rather, to the contrary, refers to a medium of representation that virtually demands methodological examination. For under the presuppositions set out by Habermas the form of critical theory is not committed to non-oppressive relations with the object, but rather to the freedom from oppression of all conceivable participants in a discussion. Habermas explains the question of theoretical form by reference to the communicative horizon of scientific research. 41

For Habermas's theory it is not the historical axis of the subject-object relation, which was so universally definitive for Adorno's philosophy, but rather the normative implications of subject-subject relations which are formative. Unlike Adorno, whose philosophical-historical perspective made necessary for him a decentralized and non-methodical philosophy, Habermas's central theoretical-historical project of including interactive processes of rationalization compels him to a form of representation which remains oriented around the ideas of intersubjective testability and discursive theory construction. The formal principle, constitutive for Adorno's philosophy, of an argumentative process which remains open and methodically unconstrained in relation to the material of individual experience, on the other hand, shifts in Habermas's case to a formal principle aimed at methodical transparency and argumentative generalizability: the formal construction of Habermas's theory is oriented toward intersubjectivity, not toward stylistic resistance against purposive rationality.

Though this new form of representation for critical theory is motivated by the philosophical-historical conception of a twofold process of socio-cultural rationalization, it is epistemologically grounded in the conception taken over from Peirce of the 'scientific community'. This denotes for Habermas the communicative infrastructure of scientific theory formation, which from within the framework of a materialistically transformed transcendental philosophy is supposed to take on the role of an essentially dialogically constructed, historically realized and, therefore, quasi-transcendental subject.<sup>42</sup> In the community of researchers the intersubjective clarification of meta-theoretical questions takes place which first makes possible the theoretical disclosure of reality from the perspective of social reproduction. The self-understanding of Habermas's theory emerges on the basis of this "subcultural background to all possible processes of research."<sup>43</sup> Its form of representation and its principle of construction are themselves both modelled after the structures of discussion which make knowledge possible. Consistent with this kind of self-interpretation, the theory is then itself con-

structured in the form of a theoretical discussion: the argumentative exchanges with the analytic theory of knowledge, with Gadamer's hermeneutics, and finally with Luhmann's systems theory are stages in the self-reflective construction of a critical theory that thinks of itself as being included in the process of the communicative rationalization of the species. In keeping with this concept, Habermas's theory is modelled in its particulars according to the structure of a dialogical praxis to which, in the broader history of human consciousness, it understands itself to be subordinated.

Just as Habermas attempts to derive the principle of his theory construction from the structures of dialogue, and to adapt its form of representation to the conditions of intersubjective testability, so is the alternative that this position represents in relation to Adorno reflected yet further in the linguistic materials of the two respective versions of critical social theory. Adorno's terminological conservatism, as a result of which the key concepts of his theory are located exclusively within the categorical horizon of philosophical idealism and its various great historical permutations, is yet again based on the guiding normative idea of a non-coercive intimacy with objects. Adorno also approached the linguistic form of critical theory from the critical standpoint of the objectification of reality developed during the course of civilization.

His early essay "Thesen über die Sprache der Philosophie" investigates the relation of oppression between language and nature as it is manifested in the signifying function of language. Insofar as the relation between word and thing is thought to be contingent, that is, insofar as language is interpreted as a mere system of signs, is then the dominating grasp of objectifying thought merely extended into the verbal material. Communicatively oriented, signifying language is in Adorno's opinion only the manifest form of that rationality which in the identification of objects abstracts from what are fundamentally richer complexes of reality. Through their denoting function words overlook those structures of meaning which the thing could of itself reveal. Against this communicative function of language Adorno's theses here seek again to orient philosophical thinking around categories more open to the object. He pursues this goal, however, not by means of an invented language which ostensibly is 'near to being', something for which he had already criticized Heidegger, but rather through the assistance of new configurations of formerly historically given linguistic material: "Today the philosopher confronts the ruins of language. His materials are the rubble of words to which history binds him; his freedom lies solely in the possibility to configure them according to the impulse toward the truth dwelling within them. He dares so little to think of a word as given as to

invent a word." 44 Philosophy understands itself as being committed to the normative model of the mimetic qualities found in the language of music. As a consequence it cannot seek to recover the relation between word and thing that has been fragmented during the course of civilization through means that do violence to language. Insofar as it cannot arbitrarily extract itself from its historical situation in the history of consciousness, there remains to critical theory, in the face of the distorted condition of language, only the possibility of using the new 'configuration' of given categories to expand sensibility in relation to the non-identical, which has been excised from the conceptually fixed object.

However much we might wish to examine more closely these hints of Adorno's, 45 in the practice of his philosophy they point out a path in the choice of categories which never deviates from its commitment to the conceptual framework of traditional philosophy. Adorno's critical theory can only regard with irony the categorical refinements emerging in the development of post-Marxist theory, particularly the terminological innovations of the social sciences.

Habermas's theory, on the other hand, proceeds in precisely the opposite manner. Since he regards it as being bound up with a discursive process in which the various competing theoretical approaches must represent their claims through argument, it cannot exempt itself from the criterion of comprehensibility in its theoretical language. Furthermore, Habermas dare not seek to conceptually immunize his theory against that process of theoretical development which he already addressed from the epistemological standpoint outlined in his examination of the community of researchers. He describes it there as a discursive formation which not only secures the possibility of knowledge but also represents a process of self-enlightenment. As a consequence of these two presuppositions Habermas's theory achieves its conceptual identity by integrating the substance of historically more recently formulated theoretical languages into the categorical framework of critical social theory in accordance with its own theoretical conception. The path leading to this theoretical self-understanding leads through Weberian action-theory as well as through philosophical anthropology, through analytic philosophy of language as well as through systems-theoretical functionalism. Even at the level of its key concepts, Habermas's theory, in contrast to the esoteric philosophical-historical reflections of Adorno's philosophy, pursues a "model of understanding" which will "penetrate into the positive sciences in order to become universal in the form of a self-reflection of the sciences." 46

These differences in the linguistic and representational forms of critical social theory reflect the philosophical-historical differences be-

tween Adorno and Habermas. With regard to the controversial formulations of the relation to practice for their two social theories, these same differences, finally, are reflected yet once more, but on a level which, for the substantive claims of critical theory, is more decisive.

### III

In Adorno's philosophy of history the process of civilization is so consistently examined from the perspective of increasing reification that it seems finally to have eliminated every conceivable historical dimension of social progress, be it in the form of an enlightened class consciousness or in the form of structural instabilities in capitalism. Neither in the empirical sense of a theoretical addressee prepared to take action, nor in the philosophical-historical sense of a moment in the process of socialization that cannot be fully integrated, is critical theory here able to identify the historical circumstance in which it could be converted into practice. Its relation to political practice is thus rendered precarious. Under Adorno's philosophical-historical premisses there remains for critical theory either the possibility of dogmatically insisting upon the claim to practical realizability, allowing this to stand unmediated alongside the theoretical disappointments of contemporary reality, or instead the resigned possibility of construing emancipatory praxis in terms of the capacity of individuals for undistorted experience. Adorno adopts this latter theoretical path. As a result, however, an immanent relation to political praxis can no longer be derived from his conception of critical theory. This can be shown through a comparison with Marxist theory.

Traditional Marxism uniformly solved the problem of converting theory into political practice with the aid of a theoretical-historical construct according to which the historical development of the proletariat would itself release the bearer of socially transformative critique. The different versions of this Marxist solution to the theory-practice problem derive their rigor from the argument that the precritical experience of a self-organizing labor force first ought to be translated into the thesis of the proletariat as the condition for the realization of philosophy.

Philosophical-historical considerations link up with basic socioeconomic presuppositions in these Marxist reflections. Marx's philosophy of history takes as its starting point the idea that both the practical-political as well as the theoretical superiority of the workers, that is, the proletarian class, develops out of the social organization of the relations of production according to the model of Hegel's dialectic

of Lordship and Bondage. From the socio-economic crisis model contained in the developed critique of political economy he derives the empirical certainty of conflict situations characteristic of capitalism in which the superiority of the proletariat, merely supposed in the philosophy of history, would be released in actual revolutionary processes. Marx then joined both lines of argument together into the supposition that from out of the immanence of alienated labor, under the compulsion of the experiences of oppression in the factory and of physical immiseration, the labor force would be emancipated as the revolutionary proletariat. The theoretical orientation to the action complex of social labor, which as a process of cooperative appropriation of nature, so to speak, shapes the proletariat, but which as a process of capitalistically organized exploitation also at the same time revolutionizes it, secures thereby for Marxist theory at least its self-understanding as offering a lasting possibility for practical realization. 47 The process of capitalist production brings forth the social class which both transforms the content of Marxist theory into political action as well as imparting to that same theory a definitive impulse. On the basis of his theoretical framework, Adorno can now no longer obtain a comparable conception regarding the place for the political realization of critique.

For Adorno the Marxist model of the relation of theory and practice must become problematic in both its respects. In the first place he no longer counts on the empirical assumption of a proletarian class consciousness that will be revolutionized through experiences of oppression. To be sure, Adorno does not call the crisis model in the critique of political economy into question, but contests instead its explanatory power for the analysis of conflict: "The contemporary doctrine of social conflict can count on the fact that, subjectively, the class struggle has been forgotten, even supposing that it ever did move the masses. That is also relevant, at least temporarily, for its objective meaning. But the objective antagonism has not disappeared as a result of integration ... the basic economic processes of society which bring forth classes have, despite all integration of the subject, not changed."48 The contradictions in the process of capital accumulation remain, but today no longer bring class specific attitudes of resistance in their wake as a consequence because the culture industry, now structurally embedded in late capitalism, has displaced social conflict onto the level of psychic conflict and so has eliminated it as an intersubjectively accessible social phenomenon.49 To this process whereby class antagonism is culturally masked there further corresponds a process of rapid growth in the forces of production which has relieved the proletarian class of just those stressful conditions associated with the experience of material immiseration



which in the phase of liberal capitalism was, despite all efforts toward ideological legitimation, supposed to have compelled the collective awareness of the battle lines in class struggle. 50 From both of these empirically informed considerations Adorno draws the conclusion which already takes him beyond the one component of the Marxist model: the investigation of the economic processes of capital accumulation, that is, the Marxist analysis of capitalism, no longer offers any indications concerning the historical necessity of the formation of proletarian class consciousness. The socio-economically based certainty regarding explicit and conscious fronts of social conflict collapses, and thus the theory can no longer account for its political efficacy through an appeal to the consciousness of a proletariat prepared to engage in action.

But Adorno's philosophy also no longer admits the second presupposition of the Marxist argument, namely, the more philosophical-historical assumption of a dimension of enlightenment built into capitalist social relations. Unlike the Marxist tradition of theory, his approach cannot regard the process of socialized labor as being at the same time a progressive force within the society since his philosophy of history tries to explain the coercive character of bourgeois society precisely in terms of the objectifying achievements of instrumental rationality. If the cooperative appropriation of nature in itself, as the anthropological reflections in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* suggest, already initiates the formation of an abstractive-instrumental social consciousness, then work as a mode of socialization can in any case no longer count as a medium of collective self-enlightenment. Thus the dimension of social production loses for Adorno precisely its twofold theoretical role, which it very nearly universally possessed in Marxist theory, as being a universal presupposition of the reproduction of social systems and, at the same time, as being the central historical space for experiences of alienation and processes of enlightenment.

As this comparison with the Marxist solution to the problem of the relation of theory and practice shows, Adorno must consequently give up not only the empirical certainty of a specific class as the theoretical addressee, but also the certainty accruing to a philosophy of history which can produce a theoretical connection to a socially constitutive dimension of enlightenment. Because critical theory recognizes here solely the historical continuity of a process of instrumental reification, on the very level of basic conceptual presuppositions an historically immanent and effective potential for emancipatory action is for it no longer even thinkable.<sup>51</sup> This philosophical-historical uncertainty, however, is that much more critical since, starting from the perspective of



this universal process of rationalization, Adorno interprets the present as its totalization and so must in principle treat all forms of social action according to the model of the instrumental appropriation of nature. Alongside the progressive process of reification there is not only no fundamental socio-cultural dimension of enlightenment to be found onto which critical theory could systematically graft its political interest, but there is furthermore no longer any dimension of action at all which allows room for emancipatory practice. In his "Marginalien zur Theorie und Praxis" Adorno affirmed the consequences of his analysis of contemporary society: in the face of the global realization of purposive rationality and reification, all forms of political practice which once had liberating potential are so fully submerged, that a dimension of effective emancipatory praxis can no longer be identified. Only a mode of action completely disburdened of any instrumental character would offer the potential for resistance that would still allow the concept of liberation to be meaningfully employed: "Should the network of complicity [*Schuldzusammenhang*] of society, and with it the prospect of catastrophe, truly have become total and nothing allows us to doubt that so is there nothing to set in opposition to it, other than that which repudiates that complex of deception [*Verblendungszusammenhang*], rather than taking on its own form and thereby merely participating." 52 The form, however, in which alone for his entire life Adorno could think of this practical opposition to the complex of deception is that of artistic production. Solely the closed system [*Hermetik*] of the individually produced and individually contemplated work of art still offered the theory a model of a rationality resistant to reification, which, at the same time, in the context of a fully integrated society, also provided the possibility of liberating insight.

The dimension of praxis appropriate for Adorno's philosophy which undermines domination is, admittedly, thereby pushed to a level in the social system that can neither structurally meet the requirements of collective action nor assume functions central for social reproduction. Individual experiences of reconciliation with nature are not, like experiences of oppression in the workplace, subject to political organization. Nor are they, like the learning processes entailed in social reproduction, constitutive for socio-cultural reproduction. Adorno set the conditions for liberating praxis so high, that even theoretically they could no longer mediate at the level of the need and interest complexes of acting subjects. Political praxis, toward which the claims of Marxist theory, through the experiences of the proletarian masses, always remained oriented, is unthinkable for Adorno's critical theory. Though

the mimetic comprehension of reality alone still creates the conditions for authentically critical insights into domination, these can then, however, only become objectified through individual artistic endeavor.

Adorno can thus draw such conclusions from his philosophical-historical conception only if he gives up the self-imposed claim of critical theory to be directed toward the relations of political action. Since the connection with political praxis, which indeed is already always instrumental in form, would drag it into precisely the complex of reification which it opposes both by virtue of its philosophical content and by virtue of its literary form, Adorno disburdens his theory of every action orientation for the sake of preserving its critical power.

Although Habermas's theory is also marked by the misleading assumptions concerning an integrated labor force, he is on the other hand now able to avoid the same pessimistic conclusions in his version of critical theory because he is able to recover a dimension of genuine political action on the basis of his guiding philosophical-historical conception of a twofold process of socio-cultural rationalization. In the continuity of processes of communicative action Habermas is able once again to frame a concrete historical basis for the practical intent of critical theory which was left dangling in Adorno's philosophy.

Like Adorno's, Habermas's theory is from the outset left in uncertainty by the empirical phenomenon which, misleadingly designated as the thesis of the '*Verbürgerlichung*' of the proletariat, became after the Second World War a central problem for social theorists no longer committed to orthodox Marxist theory. Habermas interprets the fragmentation, if not dissolution, of revolutionary class consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s not, as had Adorno, by means of the theory of the culture industry, which stands in a complementary relation to Marx, but rather in accordance with the basic assumptions of his theory, which are intended to demarcate between the socio-economic system of highly developed capitalist societies from that of liberal capitalist societies. In the philosophical-historical perspective developed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the reconstitution of the capitalist social structure by the culture industry occupies center stage. From the perspective of Habermas's theory of late capitalism, its place is taken by the political and technical-scientific reconstitution of the liberal capitalist market economy. Habermas supposes that the reduction of widespread material deprivation made possible by the increase in productive forces and the preventative measures of permanent state intervention which work to secure mass loyalty have not eliminated the economically determined class structure of capitalism, but rather are able to conceal class domination behind a veiling network of apparently technical system imper-

atives and administrative decision procedures. The developmental processes typical of late capitalism have thus politically and technologically concealed class antagonism to such an extent that enlightening experiences leading to revolutionary action orientations by the work force can no longer be developed. Habermas no longer counts on a proletariat politicized by the pressure of experience and educated through the organizing process: "... the exclusion from control over the means of production is no longer bound up to such an extent with deprivation of social rewards (income, security, education, and so forth) that this objective situation would still in any way be experienced subjectively as proletarian. And any class consciousness, especially a revolutionary class consciousness, is not to be found in the main strata of the working class today." 53 From this insight Habermas draws the same conclusions as Adorno. The classical model for the successful coupling of theory and practice, according to which the proletariat, which by a certain historical necessity has organized itself, is at the same time both the principle source of the theoretical impetus as well as the addressee of theoretical enlightenment, loses for Habermas as well the theoretical weight that it carried within the history of Marxism: "Every revolutionary theory, under these circumstances, lacks those to whom it is addressed; therefore arguments can no longer be translated into slogans. Even if there still were the critical mind, its heart is lacking; and thus today Marx would have to abandon his hope that theory can become a material force, once it has taken hold of the masses."54 Adorno allowed the empirical uncertainty which grew over the practical intent of critical theory as a result of assumptions of this kind to condense into his pessimistic *leitmotif*, which on the basis of the philosophical-historical concept of total reification supposed that all forms of social action were drawn into the network of instrumental coercion [*instrumentalen Zwangszusammenhang*]. Habermas in contrast weakens this same empirical problem in his alternative philosophical-historical account: in the concept of 'interaction' his theory reconstructs precisely that mode of action constitutive for all social systems in which processes of political enlightenment can maintain their viability even under the historical pressure of reification. Extending his theoretical scope beyond the social structure of capitalism, on which Marx had moored the possibility of revolutionary action in his theory of social classes, Habermas reaches through to the socio-cultural fact of relations of interaction in order to establish anew the possibility of theoretically guided political practice.

Thus, for Habermas, the place for the practical realization of critical theory shifts toward that dimension of social reproduction in which, across all social formations, subjects under the restricted condi-

tions of social domination reciprocally interpret their needs and intentions on the basis of valid norms. It is within relations of communicative action that the normative orientations and life interpretations critical of relations of domination should develop, that processes of collective social criticism should get underway, and that those social niches should be established in which the political work of theoretical education can be organized. In the mode of socialization structured by linguistically mediated and normatively regulated interaction Habermas recovers the historical dimension for the possible self-enlightenment of society, which the early version of critical theory had, with Marxism generally, located in social labor, and which Adorno, in accordance with his philosophical-historical premisses, had supposed to be located beyond the dimension of social action altogether, namely, in the monological experience of art.

The categorical separation of 'labor' and 'interaction' here offers, we can see, the theoretical perspective from which Habermas can reformulate the classical positions of critical theory. In seeking the relation of theory and practice, Habermas had initially, as it were, taken the back route, taking a course leading toward the constitutive historical relations of theoretical knowledge by way of the two action specific forms of experience. Now he proceeds in the direction of the conditions for the practical utilization of theory by following the path along the two fundamental forms of action entailed in social reproduction. 55

The distinction between instrumental and communicative structures of action, to which he had connected the natural and social scientific forms of knowledge by means of a transcendental pragmatism, corresponds then to the distinction between 'technology' [*Technik*] and 'praxis' in the context of his earlier inquiries into the relation of theory and political action.<sup>56</sup> Following a conceptual distinction within a tradition going back to Aristotle, Habermas understands by 'technology' the scientifically guided disposal over objectified natural and social processes, and by 'praxis' the normatively oriented communicative interaction of socialized subjects.<sup>57</sup> Habermas can thus translate the undifferentiated concept of instrumental reification, under which Adorno categorically subsumed all contemporary forms of action, into the concept of the autonomy established by forms of action aimed at technical control, without thereby being compelled from the outset to give up a domain constituted by processes of understanding driven by human need and oriented around norms. The problem of the mediation of theory and political practice tends now to present itself to him instead in just the question of how theoretical critique can again find connection with the interactive life practice of socialized subjects which, despite all

technical mystification of late capitalist politics, would in light of knowledge obtained from an anthropologically informed concept of history seem to remain a socio-culturally necessary form of socialization. In this sense the inquiry titled "Science and Technology As 'Ideology'" can already be seen to be an effort toward Habermas's particular solution to the theory-practice problematic. The investigative course for this inquiry is guided by the question of how a technologized form of political dominationa political process, that is, which has been uncoupled from normative and cultural structures of life interpretation and framed solely to fit the system imperatives of capitalismcan be practically destabilized through organizing the still intact spaces of intersubjectively constructed and normatively significant action. 58

With this formulation of the question Habermas shifts the thematic focus of the Marxist category of political practice. Marx combined the philosophical-historical emphasis upon relations of production with the political-economic deciphering of crisis situations together within the concept of the 'proletariat' in such a way that the form of political action historically central to the theory could be understood empirically as the revolutionary struggle of a class. Habermas expands the category of political action to include the relations of social interaction in which the formative processes of revolutionary social consciousness and the formulation of political strategies are already embedded. For the Marxist experience of history in the determination of political practice, the moment of strategic struggle presses to the foreground in comparison with the moments of work in political education and the formation of class consciousness. In Habermas's theory it is precisely these communicative boundary conditions of political practice which come to the forefront.59

Habermas thereby thematizes a dimension of the Marxist category of praxis which did not always have a certain place as a component of the historical-materialist tradition of theory: in the development of Marxist theory its category of political action had so frequently and thoroughly been stripped of its historical presuppositions that it was forced already to resort to the notion of the strategic action of an already unified class subject.60 As a result of such argumentative abbreviations, Marxist theory was capable neither of providing a theory-immanent structural account for the conversion of its own program into relations of social action, nor was it in a position to be able to explain the development of social groups oriented toward opposition in a manner appropriate to its own practical aims. From out of the disarray of a tradition of social criticism which appears to have lost any relevance to political action, by contrast, Habermas recoversadmittedly, at the

price of an unclarity in strategic specificity 61 in the form of relations of social interaction exactly that dimension of political action on the basis of which a clarification of this problem central for the claims of Marxist theory is made possible. The category of symbolically mediated interaction provides the theoretical framework in which the constitution of group or class consciousness in opposition to the political system can be interpreted not as the emancipatory process of a monologically acting collective subject but rather as the process of cooperative learning among individual social agents.<sup>62</sup> The same category, moreover, offers in the further distinction between communicative action and dialogical reflection (discourse) the theoretical raw material by means of which Habermas can interpret the relation between enlightening knowledge and relations of political action according to the model of psychoanalytic therapy as a process of self-reflection by oppressed groups.<sup>63</sup>

Habermas's attempt to ground political practice in interactive relations, however, is not solely directed against the conception of politics in the Marxist tradition of theory, which lacks the communicative and normative moments he has identified. It aims principally at the pessimistic conclusions of a critical theory which in the face of the global pervasiveness of reification no longer wishes to distinguish between action oriented toward achieving instrumental control and action oriented toward normatively guided understanding. By reducing the emphasis upon the idea of a reconciliation with nature and turning instead to the guiding normative idea of intersubjective understanding, Habermas brings the criteria for liberating forms of consciousness and practice which form the basis of critical theory back to the standard which once again makes at all possible the specification of politically significant emancipatory practice.<sup>64</sup> The theory now no longer supposes that the form of rationality with the capacity for opposition and emancipation is to be found in the politically disengaged manifestations of mimetic experiences of nature, but rather that it is to be sought empirically in the action spaces which emerge from social-structural processes of development as a consequence of the impetus of normative discussions. Consistent with this restructuring of theoretical priorities, the action intention of Habermas's version of critical theory is no longer oriented toward certain presupposed contents in the consciousness of social classes, but rather around social spaces established historically as a result of the power of discursive practices. As the principle model for such a shift in the action basis in social theory Habermas has sought to interpret the public space of bourgeois societies as the exemplary form for the organization of intersubjective understanding.<sup>65</sup>

Marxist critics have thus far reacted to the argumentative turn taken by critical theory, which Habermas introduced by integrating the insights of theories of intersubjectivity and the philosophy of language, more or less with obdurate defensiveness. From the perspective of a Marxist orthodoxy held to be immune against alternative theoretical developments, Habermas's intended methodological self-clarification was quickly dismissed as a merely 'bourgeois' deviation from Marxist theoretical positions. The comparison between Adorno and Habermas should, in contrast, now have made clear, though, that the shifts in indebtedness to particular theoretical traditions are not to be attributed to the individual theoretical predilections of the authors, but rather are grounded in a systematic transformation in the foundation of critical theory. In Adorno's philosophy the historical process of theoretical disappointment in relation to the emancipatory possibilities thought to inhere in social relations of production leads to the pessimistic outcome of an esoteric form of representation and the loss of any relation to political action. Habermas, however, draws from this process a different set of conclusions. He reconstructs the strong self-imposed claims of critical theory understanding itself, namely, both as being brought forth through a process of historical development and as being oriented toward relations of political action within the framework of a theory of history which makes the process of rationalization in structures of instrumental and communicative action into its systematic point of reference, rather than abiding within a philosophy of history structured around the guiding principle of social production and shaped by contemporary experience. Habermas overcomes the 'strategy of hibernation' 66 to which Adorno's philosophy finds itself committed, by having established a clear analytic distinction between the process of social appropriation of nature and that of social interaction. Only in this fashion is he able again to oppose to the dimension of social labor, which he along with Adorno understands to consist merely of a process of instrumental rationalization, a dimension of authentic emancipatory possibility internal to history. As a consequence of this philosophical-historical reorientation, critical theory can once again be regarded as the self-reflection upon a species-historical and, moreover, interactive process of formation, can again intentionally structure its mode of representation upon principles of methodological generalization and integrate the perspectives of political practice in the construction of the theory itself.

The guiding theoretical conceptions tacitly presupposed in this change of philosophical-historical foundations provides us then with

the basic framework of Habermas's theory. In the first place, Habermas shifts the central categories of the fundamental philosophical-historical scaffolding of this theory onto a level disengaged from the horizon of historical experience. At least in its more mature works, Habermas's theory simply consists no longer in a philosophy of history which intentionally restricts itself to the interpretation of its historical experience, rather instead taking up explicitly the basic presuppositions of a general theory of socially constitutive structures of action.<sup>67</sup> In the second place, the conception of a twofold process of socio-cultural rationalization, which informs the entire architectonic of Habermas's theory, brings with it a weakening of the theory's critical claims. Since the process of societal emancipation, that is, the creation of domination-free networks of social relations, has now been drawn back into the immanent structure of interactive relations, it has therefore been neutralized with regard to the structure of the social appropriation of nature. The consequence of Habermas's unburdening the concept of social labor of normative claims is that the problem of the conception of nature is defused.<sup>68</sup> Finally, Habermas understands the structures of action upon whose directed development he bases his theory of history as intersubjectively constituted and linguistically structured social relations. Thus the structure of linguistically constructed intersubjectivity becomes both the normative as well as the epistemological standard of reference for critical theory. Upon the completion of the linguistic turn in philosophy, this becomes a universal-pragmatically grounded communicative theory of society.



Chapter 6  
Foucault and Adorno:  
Two Forms of the Critique of Modernity

Besides the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the philosophical-historical magnum opus of Critical Theory, it would be difficult to find a more radical attempt to unmask the European Enlightenment than the power-theoretic work of Michel Foucault. It is no less radical in its conviction of judgement and its pathos of negativism than the work of Adorno and Horkheimer. Like the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* the centre of Foucault's critique of modernity is the experience of an unparalleled growth of power and violence: he sees the history of human emancipation, the "exit of man from his self incurred tutelage," drawn into the current of a single process of the extension of domination. Both writers tear away the veil which the belief in progress and the optimism of the Enlightenment laid over the process of civilisation by naming without illusion the "gate of the body." The silent acts of the enslavement and mutilation of the human body, in which Adorno and Horkheimer perceive the "subterranean history of Europe," Foucault recognises in the daily disciplining of the body, in its perfect training. For him too the true face of human history is revealed in the petrified violence of the prison cell, the ritual drill of the barrack square and the mute violences of school routine rather than in the moral proclamations of the constitu-

tions and the eloquent testimonies of the history of philosophy. The rationalisation of society means for Adorno and for Foucault the infliction of violence on the human body; this concise thesis appears to offer the point of convergence for the critique of modernity on which both authors worked throughout their lives.

The shared conclusion deceives, however. The harsh judgement Adorno and Foucault pass on the modern age hides the differences which exist between these two approaches to a critique of modernity. If we want to test the strengths and weaknesses, the possibilities and errors of a theory of modernity based on a critique of reason (rationality) we must first explore these divergences. This I will attempt to do by starting with Michel Foucault's theory. In a first step I will reconstruct the development of this theory to the point that its thematic proximity to Adorno's philosophy of history appears (I). In a second step I will sketch the emerging correspondences to the point where the divergencies between both philosophical approaches starts to become clear (II). In a final step I will present these differences in such a way that the perspective of an immanent critique of Foucault emerges (III).

## I

Foucault arrived at a diagnosis of the present, which is surprisingly close to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, by quite a different path than Adorno. He grew up like the whole generation of French structuralists in the climate of French post war philosophy, the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and the existentialism of Sartre. It may well have been that the teachings of Merleau-Ponty awoke his interest in the bodily constitution of man; however, he broke with phenomenological philosophy just as decidedly and sharply as his structuralist contemporaries. For them social reality did not seem to be constituted by the interpretations of human subjects to the degree supposed by the philosophical perspective of phenomenology or of existentialism; on the contrary, when all the narcissistic prejudices of anthropocentrism had been cleared away, man would appear as the captive of a chain of events, created by the anonymous rules of a social or linguistic order not meaningfully accessible to humans. This primary experience of a chain of events beyond the human subject led to the movement of structuralism in the late fifties; the intellectual mood expressed here found its aesthetic echo in the novels of the French literary avant-garde.

Foucault always came back to this literary complex of experience when he sought to clarify his own genesis; it is the subject matter of his

most famous literary studies. Foucault used the formula "thought from outside" to characterise the perception of reality crystallised in the texts of the literary avant-garde; "This thinking stands outside all subjectivity, in order to make its limits appear as if from outside, in order to proclaim its end, display its dispersion and to state its final absence." 2

Foucault is thinking of writers like Antoine Artaud, Pierre Keossowski or Maurice Blanchot when he speaks of the "disappearance of the subject" in the French literature of his time; their aesthetically estranged presentation of a world in which the human subject is the object of the sexual automatism of his body, the silent laws of his language or the anonymous sequence of events of daily life, corresponds to the artificial positivism of the "nouveau roman's" image of a society without feeling."3 Foucault sought to interpret these literary tendencies as examples of an aesthetic estrangement in which actions are displaced from the subject's horizon of meaning to the objectivity of a sequence of events outside of meaning. Every segment of a social action complex thus appears as a hermeneutically indecipherable matter of fact that is, as if from the perspective of an observer unfamiliar with a given complex of meaning.

This perspective of the "stranger," which gives the literature of the post-surrealist avant-garde a particular coldness, is also that on which the investigations of the young Foucault into the history of science are based. These investigations established his theoretical reputation beyond the frontiers of his homeland. Foucault undertakes the historiography of the European formations of knowledge with the attitude of an ethnologist; he analyses the thought patterns which shape our history with the gaze of the stranger, for whom the whole context of meaning of his own culture has become alien.4 In this fashion the history of the psychiatrisation of the mad, the development of medical knowledge and the constitution of an anthropocentric world view appears as a cognitive activity which operates with anonymous force through the horizon of perception of individuals and creates the culture of the modern age. Of course Foucault's interest in this process of knowledge is not simply documentary, the "diagnostic activity" which inspired his historiography of knowledge was directed to the harm scientific knowledge inflicted on subjects, since through the hardly perceptible violence of a system of thought it forces upon them the dualism of "madness" and "reason," pathological behaviour and rational thought. Foucault's heightened sensibility for those forms of suffering, which arise from the culturally imposed repression of instinctual and imaginative impulses alone allows us to understand the difficult synthesis achieved by his works on the history of knowledge: the unusual combination of the

knowledge of the scholar, the art of the narrator, the obsessions of the monomaniac and the sensitivity of the injured synthesis mirrored in the physiognomy of Foucault's combination of analytical coldness and sympathetic sensibility.

Foucault, however, developed his studies on the history of knowledge, which were to form an "archeology of the European modern age," only to the point at which the immanent difficulties of his method became all too apparent. Since he wanted from the estranged perspective of structuralism to describe the genesis of systems of thought as an anonymous process of knowledge formation, as a subjectless appearance and disappearance of scientific discourses, he had to leave unanswered the question whether the constitution of new contents of knowledge and forms of thought is to be derived from the chance impulses of a blind history of events or from the specific constellations of a historical situation there are sufficient indications for both answers in his writings. Foucault sought the way out of the difficulties posed by such uncertainties with his book on the "archeology of knowledge," his most difficult, unapproachable text. Only with the failure of this attempt, which succumbed to the pitfalls of an analysis of knowledge confined to the pure facticity of linguistic processes, 5 did Foucault turn to the project of an analysis of power inspired by Nietzsche. If the turn to the theory of power was motivated theoretically by the difficulties of a structuralist analysis of knowledge, politically and biographically it was motivated by the failure of the 1968 revolt in France: it was the shocking experience of the strategically perfect reactions of a politically unshakeable order of power which led Foucault personally to the development of a theory of power. Only with this step does his work leave the framework of the history of knowledge and become social analysis: the place of the culturally determining forms of knowledge is not taken by institutional and cognitive strategies of social intergration; and with this Foucault enters the terrain in which the tradition of the Frankfurt School is situated.

In Foucault's theory of power the innermost motive of his work, the sensitivity for the excluded impulses of the body and the imagination, asserts itself in the form of a conception of the disciplining of the body. It forms the centre of an ambivalent, indeed contradictory theory of power.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand Foucault wants to derive the genesis of social power from the elementary situation in which subjects with different interests confront one another on the work floor of a factory, in school or the home. It is here in the strategic episodes of everyday life that the power potentials, which have joined together like a network in the institutions of domination, must be continuously produced. This

action-theoretic approach, which Foucault formulated in the project of a "microphysics of power" and directly opposed to Althusser's narrow concept of the power of the state, is contradicted, however, by the other tendency of his theory of power: that of a systems theory which supposes a supra-individual process of the constant perfection of techniques of power. The systems theory approach finally gains the upper hand in the historical studies, the investigation of the "birth of the prison" and the completed volumes of the history of sexuality. The first study traces in relation to the institutional establishment of prison punishment the exemplary prehistory of the administrative strategy of disciplining the body which underlies the firmly established order of disciplinary power in developed societies, while the investigations of sexuality narrate the history of "biopolitical" techniques, of the administration of human sexual life through the scientific organisation of all bodily expressions.

Thus there emerges from Foucault's studies of power, all outstanding examples of a theoretically generalised historiography, a picture of the European modern age which strikingly resembles that of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The sentences with which Foucault summarised the results of his study *Discipline and Punish* sound as though they are intended to emphasize this convergence:

Historically, the process by which the bourgeoisie became in the course of the eighteenth century the politically dominant class was masked by the establishment of an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian juridical framework, made possible by the organization of a parliamentary, representative regime. But the development and generalization of disciplinary mechanisms constituted the other dark side of these processes. The general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle was supported by these tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that we call the disciplines. . . . The real, corporal disciplines constituted the foundation of the formal, juridical liberties. The contract may have been regarded as the ideal foundation of law and political power; panopticism constituted the technique, universally widespread, of coercion. It continued to work in depth on the juridical structures of society, in opposition to the formal framework that it had acquired. The 'Enlightenment', which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines. 7

## II

Only when we have followed Foucault as far as this passage from the investigation of prisons can we recognize the implicit relationship between his theory of power and Adorno's philosophy of history. Admittedly Adorno's critique of the modern age is shaped above all by the traumatic experience of fascism and stalinism; the historical point of reference for his construction of history was not the smooth functioning of late capitalist societies but the violent rule of cliques of terroristic leadership. Equally Adorno's philosophy is shaped far more by literary modernism from Kafka to Beckett than by Surrealism and its avant-garde continuations. His basic literary experience is not the faceless automatism of human life but the failure of individual self-realisation. 8 There is, however, one conviction which is just as constitutive for Adorno's critique of the modern age as for Foucault's diagnosis of modern power relations. The passage quoted above illuminates this shared dimension; for Adorno as for Foucault instrumental rationality is, I believe, the historically effective principle of thought which compels men to do violence to their potential for bodily-corporeal behavior. To this extent the critique of instrumental reason in both theories only acquires its full meaning by reference to the vital dimension of the human body, which is assumed as the "pre-rational sphere" from which the principle of instrumental rationality violently abstracts. The construction of the concept of rationality in Adorno and Foucault is guided by the compassionate awareness of the sufferings of the human body. This is the inner affinity in their critique of the modern age.

It is from this viewpoint that I want to bring out the theoretical assumptions which Adorno and Foucault appear to share as a consequence of the basic conviction underlying their critique of the modern age:

- (a) Both Adorno's critique of the modern age and Foucault's analysis of power are clearly embedded in an overriding theory which understands the process of civilisation as a process of technical or instrumental rationalisation. Whereas Adorno's concept of rationalisation is oriented to the model of the domination of nature, Foucault's concept is based rather on the model of social control. "Rationalisation" means primarily for Adorno, wholly in the sense of a Marxist reading of Weber, the increase of productive forces, for Foucault by contrast, in the sense of a Nietzschean interpretation of Weber, the increase of the means of social control and power.<sup>9</sup> The former actually means instrumental rationality, the latter, however, strategic rationality. But both writers share the assumption that this overriding process of rationalisation perfects the technical means of social domination under the cloak

of moral emancipation and thus produces the modern, forcefully unified individual. The increase of domination and the formation of identity are two sides of the one process of instrumental rationalisation. The price of this ongoing process of rationalisation becomes apparent as soon as we consider what Foucault calls the "dark side," 10 Adorno and Horkheimer the "underground history" 11 of European modernisation: it is the history of suffering, barely hidden by the juridical superstructure and marked by the progressive disciplining and subjection of living subjectivity. And this brings us to the second theoretical similarity between Adorno's and Foucault's critique of the modern age.

- b) Like Adorno Foucault sees the human body as the real victim of the overall process of instrumental rationalisation. For both living subjectivity, progressively disciplined and repressed, expresses itself primarily through the vital impulses of the human body. At this stage it is not clear what concept of the human body Adorno and Foucault employ in order to make their assertion plausible. What is clear is that the measure of the burdens of instrumental rationalisation derives not from an extended concept of rationality but from a concept of bodily subjectivity. At first sight their common theme is not the suppression of another dimension of social rationality but the destruction of the open spaces of bodily freedom. Against the background of these two basic assumptions, the overriding concept of instrumental rationalisation and the vague counter concept of bodily subjectivity, the common presuppositions of Adorno's and Foucault's theory of the modern age can now be discerned.
- c) Adorno and Foucault both place the real roots of social modernity in the radical intellectual and political changes around 1800. For Foucault this epoch constitutes a threshold in the history of power: 12 at the beginning of the nineteenth century the various techniques of corporal discipline and the human sciences which emerged from police interrogation coalesce to form in his eyes the disciplinary power which had helped shape modern society since then. The philosophical consciousness of the Enlightenment hides this revolutionary break in the history of power under the veil of humanism by elevating itself to moral universalism. Adorno's ideological-critical view of the philosophical achievements of the Enlightenment is based on a similar perspective. If for him the phase of upheaval around 1800 is not the time of the establishment of new techniques of domination but the decisive phase of the establishment of the capitalist market, like Foucault he discovers, however, in the universalistic motifs of the Enlightenment, above all in the ideas of truth, justice and freedom, the violent aspect of an identifying thinking which subsumes the particular under the general. In this re-

spect Adorno's critique of Kant's concept of freedom is the complement to the interpretation of the human sciences developed by Foucault in *The Order of Things*.<sup>13</sup> Adorno and Foucault both proceed from the idea that the basis both for a knowledge which secures domination and for the superstructure of a legal system which veils domination was created in the Enlightenment period through the generalisation of theoretical and moral validity claims. It is this presupposition which makes the image of the European modern age so curiously limited and lacking in definition for both theories. That is, Adorno and Foucault must boldly and onesidedly abstract from the cultural and moral advances sedimented in the institutions of the constitutional states, in the procedures of formal democratic elections and in the emancipatory models of the formation of identity. Since both theories are unable to do justice to the rational content of the modern process of rationalisation they entrap themselves in the same aporia of a totalising critique of reason: they cannot be sure of their own medium, of the rational content of theoretical argumentation.<sup>14</sup>

d) Finally a fourth feature common to Adorno and Foucault is their diagnosis of the forms of integration of contemporary societies. Both evidently perceive the civilising process of instrumental rationalisation as culminating in organisations of domination capable of completely controlling and directing social life. The stability of highly developed societies is the result solely of the regulative capacities of administratively fine tuned organisations: these organisations intervene like total institutions in the life context of every single individual in order to make him a conforming member of society through disciplining and control, manipulation and drilling. According to their conception of domination, modern societies are in principle totalitarian societies<sup>15</sup> that is the quintessence of the analyses Adorno and Foucault undertake of the forms of integration of late capitalist societies. However, a closer inspection reveals at this point a first small difference which in fact will make all the difference: Adorno sees the totalitarian operations of control realised through the psychic manipulations of the mass media, that is, by the agencies of the culture industry, whereas Foucault believes that the integrating operations are secured rather through those corporal disciplinary procedures performed by such loosely related institutions as the school, the factory or the prison. What interests me here is not the difference between the rather statist model of social compulsion to which Adorno inclined and Foucault's structuralist model of compulsion, but rather the decisive question of the concept of the subject which is reflected in the differing analyses of society. In a third step I will follow the implications of this difference to the point at which it becomes



clear that a fundamentally different critique of human subjectivity forms the basis of both theories of the modern age.

### III

Foucault understands the force of control which emanates from the ruling institutions as a force of corporal disciplining: the vital impulses of the human body are forcefully broken by perfect drilling and training, coerced into an habitual pattern and thereby disciplined. The basis of modern practices of power is formed, as it says in the passage cited, by the "corporal disciplines." Foucault can in principle be satisfied with the knowledge of these techniques which act upon the body because he supposes that the psychic characteristics of the subject, that is to say, its personality structure, are in general products of particular kinds of bodily discipline: the psychic individuality of a subject is thus seen as the precipitate of external action on his body. Foucault's almost behavioristic positing of individuals as formless and conditionable creatures owes much to his structuralist beginnings.

Adorno of course argues differently: he understands the force of control which emanates from the centralised organisations of administration as a force of psychic influence. The basis of modern organisations of dominance is formed by the techniques of cultural manipulation in the mass media. Adorno accords these strategies of manipulation such importance because he regards it as one of the characteristics of the post-liberal era of capitalism that subjects have lost the psychic strength for practical self-determination; 16 the techniques of manipulation are only able to dispose over individuals as if over objectified natural processes because subjects are beginning to lose the ego-capacities acquired in the course of the history of civilisation at the expense of aesthetic capacities. What Foucault appears in his theory of power to assume, as it were, ontologically the conditionability of subjects Adorno grasps as the historical product of a process of civilisation which goes back to the early stages of the history of mankind. As this difference shows, Adorno is guided in his conception of the modern age by a different critique of the modern subject than Foucault. He has something else in mind with his problematising of modern individuality than Foucault with his idea of a deconstruction of the subject.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Adorno's critique of the modern subject is intended as a historical-philosophical questioning of the instrumental form of organisation of human subjectivity, Foucault bases himself theoretically on a linguistic, and to this extent, on a critique in principle of the meaning constituting subject in order to demonstrate that the

modern individual is nothing but a violently produced fiction. Whereas Adorno criticises the modern age from the standpoint of a possible reconciliation of the subject with his drives and imagination which have been split off by the civilizing process, Foucault attacks the idea of human subjectivity itself. This difference of approach in the critique of the subject, the difference between a critique inspired by philosophy of history and a critique of principle derived from linguistics of the modern model of the subject, naturally alters the framework within which reference can be made to bodily-corporal behaviour. In order to illustrate this I will present the two versions of a critique of the subject a little more precisely.

Adorno's philosophy of history contains, if I understand it rightly, a critique of the subject on two levels. On the first level the emergence of the modern subject is interpreted as a process of repressive identity formation within the framework of an anthropologically oriented theory of civilisation: only through sensory limitations and instinctual repressions are the ego capacities formed which as a whole denote the concept of the "subject" in the modern age. On a second social psychological level it is then empirically asserted that this ego is disintegrating under contemporary conditions because the socio-cultural preconditions for the necessary acts of discipline are disappearing. The normative framework in which this historical-philosophical argument is embedded, is provided, however, by an aesthetic theory of successful ego formation. 18 This theory posits, like the German Romantics, that the formation of human identity leads to a spontaneous self-identical ego only to the degree that there is free communication between outer sensory impressions and the inner sensibility of the subject; the human being attains freedom to the degree that it opens instinct and imagination to the sensuous multiplicity of natural impressionsthis is what Adorno means when he speaks in *Negative Dialectics*19 of the utopia of a victimless subjectivity. This aesthetic concept of ego identity, which obviously presents an idiosyncratic amalgam of Nietzsche, Freud and Klages,20 provides Adorno not only with the standard for a critique of modern subjectivity, but also provides him at the same time with a point of orientation for a revealing interpretation of the process of civilization. Because Adorno is guided by a concept of bodily freedom he can see in the psychic suffering of the neurotic or the schizophrenic the speechless proclamation of the human impulse to self-reconciliation, to the reintegration of the drives split off by civilisation. This is the reason why Adorno always sought to demonstrate the standard which he made the foundation of his critique of the modern age with his aesthetic concept of ego-identity, by reference to the suffering of the psychically ill, who testify not to an intra-social reconciliation but to the memory of its repression.

Foucault too could have understood his critique of the modern age, motivated by the same compassionate awareness of the injuries to the human body, in this fashion: he could have regarded the psychic suffering of individuals as the social expression of the disciplining and repression which affects the human body. We find, however, no trace of an interpretative approach of this kind in Foucault's writings; the understanding of the psychic suffering of subjects as being a last individual impulse to reconciliation was alien to him. His critique of the subject stood in the way of such an understanding just as Adorno's critique demanded it. The framework of the critique of the subject which enters into Foucault's conception of the modern age is given by a linguistically grounded destruction of the meaning constituting subject. 21 According to him the modern subject is finally nothing but the fictive unity generated either by the anonymous rules of discourse or produced by violent strategies of domination. But if the individual is denied every intentional impulse then the psychic suffering of the subject can no longer be interpreted as the silent expression of a rape of human body.22 That is why as a consequence of his structuralist critique of the subject, Foucault must introduce the human body as a faceless, endlessly conditionable bundle of energy. The theoretical dilemma, however, to which his quasi-behavioristic concept of the body leads is obvious: although everything in his critique of the modern age appears concentrated on the suffering of the human body under the disciplinary action of the modern apparatus of power, there is nothing *in* his theory which could articulate this suffering *as* suffering. His theory finally degenerates into a version of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* reduced to systems theory. He is forced to describe with the positivistic equanimity of a Luhmann an objective process of the increase of power, which Adorno was still able to attack by means of an admittedly problematic philosophy of history.23

PART II  
INQUIRIES IN THE FRENCH TRADITION OF SOCIAL THEORY

## Chapter 7

### A Structuralist Rousseau:

#### On the Anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss

There are scientific theories that seem to guard their innermost impulse like a secret. The fundamental philosophical conviction from which their entire force is drawn is so inconspicuously smuggled into particular studies that from the outside it is hardly to be recognized. As theoretical progress in the social sciences is often largely driven by such theories, so it is precisely they that are often enough exposed during their own time to the danger of fundamental misunderstandings. Since their decisive and fundamental idea never makes an explicit appearance, such theories are as a whole easily confused with the contribution which they make toward the solution of specific problems in their discipline. And as the examples of Durkheim and Weber show, it is only the history of a theory's reception which gradually sets free the basic philosophical thought according to which alone they can be appropriately understood. The anthropological work of Claude Lévi-Strauss illustrates the case of such a theory today. As widespread as his name is in the social-scientific community is also a significant misunderstanding: that he dedicated his entire effort to constructing an anthropological science whose sole aim lay in the austere analysis of structures of myths and forms of kinship. It is supposed that Lévi-Strauss introduced the meth-

ods of structuralist linguistics into ethnographic research because he wanted in this manner to give the latter discipline the character of an objective science. The primary intent of his theory is consequently taken to be the attempt to bring the study of archaic cultures to a higher degree of scientific rigor than had previously been achieved. One could scarcely hope to find a more wrong-headed interpretation.

It is, first of all, a romantic impulse that provides the deepest lying source of animation for Lévi-Strauss's work, anything but a positivistic confidence in the sciences. Not only the foundation of his ethnological approach as a whole, but its realization in particulars as well are marked by the romantic conviction that in the modern world the organic connection of humans with nature has been painfully destroyed. Lévi-Strauss set the formidable undertakings of his ethnological investigations in motion in order to provide access, from the perspective of a modernity estranged from nature, to the cosmological world view of archaic peoples. Since an unmediated return is no longer possible in this day and age, it is to be demonstrated by means of a contemporary science that humans as one life form among others are bound up together in solidarity with the cycle of nature. Structuralism represents for Lévi-Strauss the science that is in the position to achieve this end. Thus we find in his work the birth of social scientific structuralism out of the spirit of a Rousseauian romanticism. Only from the perspective of this innermost motive are his writings to be understood; only according to it can they be meaningfully examined.

I

Lévi-Strauss produced his first major investigation when in 1955 he furnished with his travel report *Tristes Tropiques* 1 a kind of intellectual justification for his ethnological efforts. Among the many smaller studies that preceded this one, there was hardly one to be found that had dealt with the question of the cultural role of ethnology as such. The author of this account was originally not an ethnologist. He received his training as a student of philosophy in the same intellectual climate of the 1920s and 1930s which Piaget, in looking back, could also only describe with scorn and irritation.<sup>2</sup> France in those days was dominated by a philosophy, informed by Bergsonian vitalism and Husserlian phenomenology, that had renounced the empirical procedures of the natural sciences and remained self-referentially self-enclosed. Instead of engaging in a critical encounter with current scientific research, the self-appointed goal of this philosophy was to obtain meaningful statements concerning human beings solely by means of a pure description of acts of consciousness. For Piaget

as for Lévi-Strauss this experience represented the beginning of a disappointment for which no amends could be made: "Philosophy was not," wrote Lévi-Strauss some thirty years later, and not without indignation, in *Tristes Tropiques*, "the servant and auxiliary of scientific exploration, but a kind of aesthetic contemplation of consciousness by itself." 3 This unproductive, indeed sterile self-sufficiency of philosophy provoked the two young scientists to their preoccupation with empirical research, the one driven to biology and psychology, the other grasping for the "escape route of ethnography."<sup>4</sup>

Accident came to aid Lévi-Strauss in his choice. Through the mediation of Célestin Bouglés he was offered the position of a Professor of Sociology in São Paulo in 1934. He accepted the offer without hesitation, giving up his position as a secondary school teacher that, like so many French philosophers, he first held, and with that set out on the scientific path that he was from then on never to leave.

As soon as he was established in Brazil as a university instructor Lévi-Strauss made his first ethnographic excursion into the interior of the country. What he collected in experiences and impressions during the few months he was to spend there formed the emotional foundation of all of his future thinking. The Indian culture of the Mató Grosso to which his explorations lead him was in a state of inner collapse. Western civilization had advanced with silent violence into the surviving aboriginal tribes, deprived them of the integrity of their cultural life and left intact only a few of the received habits of thinking. It is not difficult to imagine the full extent of the psychic turmoil that must have fallen upon this recent convert to ethnology as he came to realize the hopeless situation of the aboriginal culture he had intended to investigate. It required nearly twenty years before Lévi-Strauss could give literary expression to the feelings of shame and despair, guilt and sorrow that accompanied him on his first excursion. The result of this virtually poetic endeavor is represented by the book about the *Tristes Tropiques*. It can without exaggeration be said to count today as one of the greatest products of ethnological thinking in our century.

It is no accident that in its style and construction the book reminds us of that travel literature that emerged during the age of the Enlightenment. Like Montesquieu in France and Forster in Germany, Lévi-Strauss combines careful detail in his descriptions of each stage of his journey with scientific observations on the way of life of the tribes he visited. The author of *Tristes Tropiques* shows the same loving meticulousness in recording cultural characteristics and the same circumspect care in describing personal encounters that dominates the classics of travel literature. The enormous richness of detail, exactness of observation and scientific circumspection have for him, of course, above all now

the task of lending clear expression to that problem concerning which the trying experience of his first excursion made him permanently aware. If the lack of political concern of an entire generation of his predecessors spared them from confronting the question of what role ethnological research must take on in the face of the continuing destruction of archaic cultures, it is precisely this question that comprises the actual center of Lévi-Strauss's book. In the answer to this question, which in the end found expression in constantly renewed reflections, we see the tumultuous and alarmed feelings of his ethnographic beginnings transformed into the pathos of the Romantic.

It is, though, anything but a so-called romantic yearning for the natural that leads Lévi-Strauss in his definition of the task of ethnology. He distances himself from the naïve view that seeks to find in the remains of archaic cultures a primordial state of human social existence. Conversely, he condemns with equal determination all evolutionary modes of thought that suppose the task of ethnological research to be that of assigning the ways of life of archaic societies directly to a stage-sequential scheme of social development. Both views are guilty of unexamined idealizations: the first naïvely idealizes "the savage," the second, no less uncritically, the "mechanical civilization" of the present. Lévi-Strauss believes, moreover, that views of this type cannot do justice to the fundamental responsibility that ethnology itself bears for the inexorable destruction of archaic cultures. Since ethnographic research always served the interests of colonial rulers, it must today act as a "symbol of atonement" in order to make up for the crimes to which it contributed. As both of the above-mentioned positions are not able to carry out this additional task of atonement, because their respective idealizations allow only the complementary and mutually reinforcing prejudices of European civilization to come into play, the problem thus arises as to how an appropriate understanding of ethnology is to be obtained. One of Rousseau's thoughts offers for Lévi-Strauss a way out of this difficulty. The significance that Rousseau's thought possesses for his theory as a whole can today hardly be overestimated. Not only does he again and again describe Rousseau as the "most ethnographical of all philosophers" 5 and consistently call him his "teacher," indeed, his "brother"; it is also to Rousseau that Lévi-Strauss attributes the inspiration for his thoughts at every important station on his theoretical journey.<sup>6</sup> In *Tristes Tropiques* it is the methodological version of the conception of a "state of nature" that he takes from Rousseau's writings. Exactly twice Lévi-Strauss cites the latter's noteworthy requirement to separate "what is primordial and what is artificial in man's present nature, and in obtaining a good knowledge of a state which no longer ex-



ists, which has perhaps never existed, and which will probably never exist in the future, but of which it is nevertheless essential to have a sound conception in order to pass valid judgment on our present state." 7 Lévi-Strauss turned this sentence into a guiding methodological principle: the first corresponding task to fall to ethnographic research is to increase our understanding of the "principle of the social life" so that in this way a solely methodologically intended notion of "the state of nature" could be won. The investigation of archaic societies makes it possible, namely, to study different solutions for common problems in the organization of social life, so that in accord with an increase in empirical information, the approximate picture of a "natural sociality" can be constructed. And only such a methodological construction of a "state of nature" would offer us the possibility of "reforming our own customs and not those of foreign societies."<sup>8</sup>

A second premise enters now into this train of thought, however, which alone makes it all clear how an ethnology understood in this manner should at the same time also engender the moral strength required for atonement. Lévi-Strauss admittedly discloses only in very few places in his book a glimpse of the true romantic motive which is to be found in this second presupposition. They alone, however, give these methodological considerations their entire meaning. They alone lend a moral significance to his ethnology, and they also are indebted to Rousseau's thought. More is involved in the attentiveness that Lévi-Strauss shows to the cultures of surviving aboriginal tribes than a mere methodological interest. It is motivated by a profound respect for the beginnings of human socialization that itself is born of the deep romantic conviction that in archaic cultures one finds not so much a piece of unmediated nature as one finds a specific capacity for an intimate integration within the wider life-network of nature. Thus he speaks not infrequently of the "wisdom" and "spiritual harmony" of wild people, and thus also he calls forth the image of "an eye in which the living world was not yet divided," because "affectionate familiarity between plants, animals and humans" ruled. As the counterpart to this image of intimacy with nature belongs a diagnosis of the time that regards a violent self-diremption out of the cycle of natural life as the characteristic development of modern society. At no other place did Lévi-Strauss more clearly express the basic assumptions of his diagnosis as in his celebrated lecture on Rousseau.

We started by cutting man off from nature and establishing him in an absolute reign. We believed ourselves to have thus erased his most unassailable characteristic: that he is first a living being. Re-

maintaining blind to this common property, we gave free rein to all excesses. Never better than after the last four centuries of his history could a Western man understand that, while assuming the right to impose a radical separation of humanity and animality, while granting to one all that he denied the other, he initiated a vicious circle. The one boundary, constantly pushed back, would be used to separate men from other men, and to claim to the profit of ever smaller minorities the privilege of a humanism, corrupted at birth by taking self-interest as its principle and its notion. 9

This diagnostic observation upon the age first rounds out the picture of the tasks of ethnology that Lévi-Strauss seeks to outline in looking back upon his first excursions. Ethnography is justified as an empirical science of archaic cultures by the experience of estrangement from nature characteristic of modern societies. For the description of this condition of modernity Lévi-Strauss has already the typical romantic concepts of "disharmony," "imbalance," and "inauthenticity." Under the leading hypothesis that the surviving cultures of archaic peoples represent examples of forms of social life intimately engaged with nature, ethnological research then commences with the project of reconstructing, out of the mass of its empirical data, theoretical models of such "harmonious" societies. They could then serve as mirrors to a fragmented present, in which it would be able to recognize its mistakes. In brief, the task of social anthropology would consist, "especially in the most troubled times," in waking "a permanent hope for mankind," that is embedded in the ways of thought and life of archaic societies.<sup>10</sup> In this social anthropology also comes upon the task that confronts it morally with the consciousness of its own guilt.

Claude Lévi-Strauss gives yet another twist to this definition of the task of ethnology, we should be aware, that first determines the unique characteristic of his own theory. It consists in the programmatic idea that the ethnological constructs in their turn are to embody already the comprehensive naturalism which marks the thought forms of archaic cultures. To a certain extent, through the selection of its theoretical means, ethnology must make itself into an element of that naturalistic world view, the progressive destruction of which has lead modern societies into the current state of painful fragmentation. Not only the subject of ethnological research but also the methodological form of its investigations is to be shaped by a constant, sympathetic concern with the comprehensive network of natural life. This bold thought permeates the entire width and breadth of Lévi-Strauss's work. It determined the first large-scale investigations into the rules of archaic kinship relations.

It enters into the research on totemism and finally also into the studies of the mythical worlds of aboriginal indians. All of these are components of a program that is concerned with the apparently paradoxical justification of an expansion of humanism by means of structuralism.

## II

Lévi-Strauss's theoretical beginnings fell in a period in which French social science was still completely dominated by the doctrines of Durkheim and his students. Lévi-Strauss wrested the theoretical basis for his first great study out of an exchange with this school of sociological thought. The work that was to propel him to an early fame within the scientific community is an investigation into the fundamental rules of archaic kinship relations. 11 It was published in the 1940s, which Lévi-Strauss spent, after his departure from Brazil, first for some time in New York and finally, having returned to France, as the head of studies [*Studienleiter*] for ethnology at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris. His larger investigation was preceded by a number of smaller essays concerning the social organization of indigenous societies which carried out the intellectual preparation for the idea that was first completely laid out in the book published in 1949.

The ambitious goal which Lévi-Strauss set for himself with his study inconspicuously reflects the task that he had, in taking recourse to Rousseau, put to anthropology: the multiplicity of kinship forms that are to be found empirically in archaic cultures ought to be traced back to a few elementary basic patterns, so that as a result the theoretical model of a "natural" social order emerges. Lévi-Strauss obtains the intellectual means with which he is to make good this far-reaching claim from a systematic generalization of the hypothesis that Marcel Mauss had developed concerning the social function of gift exchange. In his pioneering study *The Gift*, as is known, Mauss, one of Durkheim's students, was pursuing the question of what role archaic rituals of exchange such as the North-Pacific Potlatch and the Melanesian Kula assume in the social life of their respective cultures. His answer, which proved extremely fruitful for all subsequent research, consisted in the hypothesis that such institutions of regulated giving and receiving of gifts served to maintain a constant flow of information between the different groups of a society. It is this idea of the communication instituting role of exchange that Lévi-Strauss now uses to his advantage in the context of ethnological research into kinship. He takes up this idea in his attempt to understand the marriage rules characteristic of archaic

cultures as obligations of exchange that apply to the exchange of women rather than to the circulation of goods.

This starting point for his reflections represents a new interpretation of the incest taboo. The fact that in virtually all cultures sexual relations within the narrower family circle are strictly forbidden has provoked the social sciences since their very beginnings to repeated new attempts at explanation. The list of scientists who have devoted their attention to this phenomenon reaches from Spencer through Durkheim to Freud. Lévi-Strauss begins his book with a discussion of these different theoretical contributions. In contrast to interpretations that predominate today, which for the most part move within a psychoanalytic framework, he traces the universality of the incest taboo back to the functional meaning that it has assumed in the process of social integration. Its universal validity can be explained solely on the basis that family groups are urged indirectly toward constant interaction because sexual intercourse within the bounds of the family is inhibited. Given the form of a positive prescription, the incest taboo now constitutes the fundamental mechanism of all types of kinship formation. In the form of the rule of exogamy, the taboo stipulates that families must in each case relinquish women from their own ranks to other groups for marriage in order thus to receive women for marriage from them in return. In this way the reciprocal exchange of women is shown to be the fundamental mechanism out of which the formation of kinship relations develops. As the institutional core of archaic societies it assures the reciprocal contact of social groups to an extent even greater than that of which the exchange of gifts is capable. In order to do justice to the different ways of building kinship relations, Lévi-Strauss distinguishes between two forms of such an exchange of women. Whereas in the limited form of exchange the women are always directly exchanged between two groups, the generalized exchange takes place only indirectly among at least three participating groups. In this second case the family group does not receive a woman in exchange from the same group to which they had in turn relinquished a woman for marriage. Lévi-Strauss's conviction is that the complex kinship organizations are composed of elements from these two types of exchange of women. From them he thus attempts more with the methods of a logician than with those of an ethnographer to reconstruct the empirical diversity of archaic social organizations.

Although among ethnologists scarcely one would not have recognized the outstanding import of this investigation shortly after its publication, the majority of them nonetheless registered considerable

misgivings with regard to the study's basic theoretical presuppositions. 12 The indirect equation of the incest taboo and the rule of exogamy, upon which the argument was based, fell no less into doubt than the empirical hypothesis of a cross-cultural predominance of unilinear systems of descent. Moreover, Lévi-Strauss also encountered criticism for so unapologetically having dispensed with any speculations concerning an earlier matriarchal epoch, the scientific validity of which is contested even today. In the face of all this, though, the motives which had originally lead Lévi-Strauss were easily lost from sight. The theoretical goal of obtaining insight into the "principles of social life" by means of a constructive model formation was hidden behind the empirical constitution of his study. Not the exhaustive explanation of all empirical data, but rather the idealizing construction of a model on the basis of empirical data was the far-reaching demand that Lévi-Strauss had placed upon himself. Measured in these terms, despite all justified criticism, his study achieved a decisive breakthrough. Lévi-Strauss discovered that the power of exchange to institute communication reached beyond the economic sphere into the organization of kinship relations. The reciprocal exchange between social groups could thus insofar count as one of the media of social formation, toward the systematic investigation of which his theory was aimed. The fruitfulness of this discovery must have proved all the greater for Lévi-Strauss, since it offered early encouragement to the romantic impulse within his work. In the principle of reciprocity or mutuality, namely, exchange contained a social power that proved to be not only the "raw material" of social life, but also above and beyond that was able to yield the affective basis of a unified world view that includes all life forms. Archaic societies, as was shown by the different forms of exchange, are still clearly built upon social relations of reciprocity. Thus, in contrast to modern civilizations, in which the principle of reciprocity is overcome by technical and bureaucratic processes, archaic societies also possess the greater possibility of being understood on the basis of the idea of solidarity. This thought is admittedly first encountered in Lévi-Strauss's investigation only in an embryonic form, but from this time on he keeps his attention focussed on this idea and will, with every new book, return to it yet that much more exhaustively. While in his study Lévi-Strauss succeeded in reaching the theoretical point at which the reciprocity embodied in exchange was shown to be a constitutive principle for all societies, he still had to address the question of what had, in turn, brought about this principle. The closing observations of his book offer a first answer to the problem that is thereby raised.

Lévi-Strauss had learned enough from Durkheim to know that the functional analysis of a phenomenon cannot replace its causal explanation. But now precisely his attempt to explain causally the principle of reciprocity, which is constitutive for society as a whole, leads him beyond Durkheim. Since during his own lifetime, Durkheim was the authority for the question concerning the social prerequisites for the constitution of the categories of human knowledge. He had in this regard attempted to give to Kant's epistemology, by reference to which he continuously oriented himself, a sociological twist. In the last phase of his life, during which the composition of his brilliant study *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* took place, the examination of situations of extraordinary collective experience seemed to him finally to make possible the solution to his problem. The fundamental categories of human knowledge are thought to be conceptual representations of experiences that a community is able to bring about itself while in the affective states of a collective fusion or "effervescence." 13 With this answer, admittedly, Durkheim gave his students just as many difficulties as new ideas. The work of Marcel Mauss likewise has a lively share of both, since in it Durkheim's formidable proposal shortly found itself in conflict with the theoretical position which Lévi-Strauss was to develop only a few decades later.<sup>14</sup> Already in his report on "French Sociology" that appeared in 1945,<sup>15</sup> Lévi-Strauss raises objections to Durkheim's work that henceforth serve as the foundation for his own position. The theoretical difficulties into which Durkheim runs when he falls back on collective emotional states as a final explanatory fact represent for Lévi-Strauss merely the expression of an inappropriate formulation of the problem. The symbolic achievements that the former seeks to explain sociologically simply cannot be further traced back to social facts, because they for their part first give rise to the social. Lévi-Strauss is convinced that the forms of symbolic thought represent a given datum that cannot be further explained sociologically. Instead he regards the intersubjectively binding character of shared symbols, through which a social order is constituted, to be embedded in presocial facts, to which not sociology, but rather "modern psychology and linguistics" provide theoretical access. The presocial area that he has in mind he defines programmatically as the "unconscious activity of the human mind." With this we are given the conceptual formula that from now on will provide the *leitmotif* for Lévi-Strauss's scientific work. The theoretical observations with which the investigation into the structures of kinship closes find in this theoretical formula as well a provisional answer to the question raised: the principle of reciprocity which is constitutive for all forms of kinship, it says, is generated by the fundamental structure of

the human mind. Here, though, with these early references to structuralist linguistics, Lévi-Strauss also reveals to us the instruments with which he believes he can in the future analyze that unconscious activity of the human mind.

### III

The programmatic idea that it is the unconscious activity of the human mind that produces the symbolic order of society possessed for Lévi-Strauss from the beginning more than merely social scientific implications. All hypostatizing language aside, by this idea is meant first of all only that across the separation of culture and time there are a multiplicity of mental operations that are common to all humans. The structure of the human mind in this respect represents, as is said in the Rousseau essay, "a primordial connection" between "the self and the other." 16 At the same time, since it is supposed to have unconscious effect, Lévi-Strauss also sees in that operation of the mind an element of nature in humans. With them, natural processes that are withdrawn from all conscious control spill over into the human mode of life and allow it to be a part of a comprehensive totality. These two aspects invest the concept of the human mind in Lévi-Strauss's work with its subterranean emotive force. More than simply the conceptual means toward overcoming difficulties in Durkheim's sociology, it should serve as the conceptual foundation for an expanded humanism that should replace the truncated modernity that has forgotten nature. Lévi-Strauss is not the only one who in those days linked such wide-ranging philosophical purposes with a universal conception of the human mind. At that time Jean Piaget also sought a way out of what must have seemed to him to be the sterile situation of contemporary philosophy via the project of a scientific analysis of universal laws of composition [*Aufbaugesetze*] of human knowledge. He also attempted at first to turn to a natural substratum in which the mental operations of humans are supposed to be anchored. It is thus the later determination of those formal laws [*Formgesetze*] of human mental activity that lends their specific character to these approaches, which in the beginning were still quite comparable.<sup>17</sup> Along Lévi-Strauss's scientific path it was the discovery of structuralist linguistics that presented him with the means to state more precisely the general idea of a model and thus gave to his work its unmistakable essential character.

His first encounter with structuralist linguistics took place during the year which Lévi-Strauss spent in New York as a university instruc-



tor. Here he made the acquaintance of Roman Jakobson, an exiled member of the Prague school of linguistics, who quickly made him familiar with the fundamentals of Saussure's linguistics. 18 From the first moment Lévi-Strauss was completely convinced that structural linguistics offered precisely the theoretical method with which the structural laws of human mental activity could further be illuminated. It was admittedly also only very vague notions that, from the fund of ideas handed down by that multi-faceted school, he appropriated for his own purposes. Central among them for him is the thought that a system of linguistic signs formed the basis of all linguistic utterances, in which system the individual elementary signs obtain their meaning solely from reciprocal relations of difference. Lévi-Strauss now transfers this structuralist premise to his universal concept of the human mind. From this follows the consequence that the unconscious thought operations of human beings consist in conferring meaning, through the formation of oppositions, upon any element of a given order.

The basic thought which was thereby attained, though, only gradually assumes clear contours in Lévi-Strauss's work. The first essays to try to make the new idea fruitful within ethnology actually were published during the transition to the 1950s. They all still move, however, within the thematic framework that was initiated with the studies of the social organization of archaic societies.19 Within this formulation of the problem it is not easy to make a direct use of the idea that the meaning of symbolic constructs comes from the unconscious production of symbolic oppositions. Nonetheless, for Lévi-Strauss such a connection results when he draws parallels between the role of the exchange of women in kinship formation and that of the exchange of words in communication. The implausible assumptions upon which such a comparison must rest, however, were early on and convincingly identified by critics.20 And in the work of the ethnographer, to the extent that he shifts his interest from research into kinship to the study of archaic forms of thought, these first and still immature attempts lose their priority [*Stellenwert*].

The practical obstacles that originally may have stood in the way of a fruitful utilization of the new idea disappear from the moment in which Lévi-Strauss makes the symbolic constructs directly into the object of his investigations. He described this transformation in his approach himself, which took place in the course of the 1950s, as a theoretical transition from the "order of life" to the "order of thought," in which the unconscious thought operations of human beings come to light.21 By such an "order of thought" Lévi-Strauss has in mind all forms of religious and mythical thought. The cognitive structures that lie at the



basis of such formations of social life from now on constitute the primary interest of his theoretical work. A critical engagement with conventional interpretations of totemism represents his entry into this new field of research. 22 In contrast with predominant interpretations, which trace the totemic practices of primitive peoples back to a magical belief in supernatural powers, Lévi-Strauss tries to show that in these practices a form of thought typical of all archaic cultures is given a particular application. He accounts for the specific circumstances which determine this application in the first place with the help of sociological arguments that result from an extension of his analysis of forms of kinship. Due to the constant exchange of various goods, the communicative relations among archaic societies constantly threaten to intensify to the point at which the social groups come into the danger of losing their own identities. Thus there always emerges a need for the social counter movement of a symbolic "distinction" between the interacting groups. The practices which are called "totemic" thus offer the opportunity for this distinction insofar as they allow the social groups to ritually utilize given concrete objects of their natural environment as signs of their respective identities. Consequently, the special purpose of all totemic practices consists for Lévi-Strauss in the maintenance of group specific identities. In the cognitive techniques that thereby come to application, however, in namely the formation of correspondences between natural and social phenomena, he sees again the general characteristic that distinguishes the thought forms of archaic cultures in general from those of modern civilization.

The study *The Savage Mind*, published in 1962, assembled the evidence for this formidable thesis.<sup>23</sup> In no other of his books did Lévi-Strauss more freely allow his complete romantic admiration for the cultural achievements of archaic societies to come to the fore. This shows itself here particularly in the fundamental claim that archaic thought is not to be understood merely as a preliminary stage of, but rather as an alternate form to the scientific world view. In presenting evidence for this thesis, Lévi-Strauss gradually uncovers the cognitive operations upon which the special case of totemic classification has already first shed light. The "wild" thinking, as it is called in contrast to the "domesticated" mode of thought of developed societies, fixes concretely upon sensibly perceivable phenomena, assigns them to one another through the formation of contrasts and analogies, and thus finally produces a comprehensive network of vivid sensible correspondences. Lévi-Strauss is aware that such an analogical form of thinking is inferior when contrasted to the instrumental yield of modern sciences. But, conversely, it is also not the unrestrained and proliferate utilization of sensible prop-

erties that leads him to understand this classificatory thought as an alternative to scientific world views. What fascinates him above all is the concerned, indeed, virtually loving attention to the natural environment that stands as a constitutive condition of that form of knowledge. It is in turn again with Rousseau's intellectual help that Lévi-Strauss describes this sensibility of archaic thinking. Therein lies the feeling of a "primordial accord" at work, in which "Rousseau had deeply understood the condition of solidarity of that thought and that society." 24 This same connection is yet more clearly described in one passage in his essay on Rousseau, where he writes:

This faculty Rousseau did not neglect to repeat is compassion, deriving from the identification with another who is not only a parent, a relative, a compatriot, but any man whatsoever, seeing that he is a man, and much more: any living being, seeing that it is living. . . . The total apprehension of men and of animals as sensitive beings (in which identification consists) precedes the awareness of oppositions oppositions first between common characteristics, and only later between human and nonhuman.25

Certainly it is not incorrect, then, to suppose that the secret center, indeed, perhaps even the long sought result of Lévi-Strauss's scientific endeavors lies in these findings. A feeling of solidarity and primordial accord with every natural life form (bearing an inner kinship with Adorno's doctrine of mimesis)26 is therewith proposed as the fundamental "principle" of all social life. If such feelings of comprehensive solidarity with nature are still empirically to be found in archaic cultures, it is because there they are immediately and concretely contained not only in the rules of social life but also in the forms of classificatory thought. These feelings are virtually buried by technical rules of procedure in the mechanistic civilization of modernity. Only with "people of the circus and employees of zoological gardens,"27 as it is poignantly put in *the Savage Mind*, are remains of such intimate forms of knowing nature to be tracked down. In the face of this civilized condition, it is to ethnology that the task falls of reminding us, through empirically oriented investigations, about the integration of all social life with the natural world so as to lay the scientific foundation for a naturalistically corrected humanism. Thus it is also not surprising that an ecological ethic is to be found in Lévi-Strauss's more recent publications, and, further, that he develops initial suggestions for a concept of human freedom that is expanded by the inclusion of relations to nature.28

In the extent, however, to which this philosophical core of his work is gradually disclosed, and to which admiration of the inner rigor

of the romantic vision grows, must also be added theoretical doubt about whether the vast scope of such an undertaking is at all meaningfully to be attained through the simple appropriation of structuralist concepts. To be sure, structuralist linguistics offers Lévi-Strauss a methodological means by which archaic myths of the most different origin can be investigated with surprising accord by means of a formal parsing into pregnant complexes of meaning. But he must accept along with this not only a questionable side-stepping of all hermeneutic problems of interpretation, but also above all the exclusion of such questions as the inner motivation of mythical texts precisely those questions concerning which his romantic expectations would have to demand an answer. To be sure, the structuralist version of his conception of the human mind allows him to judge the classificatory arts of archaic cultures to be a still free, even a "wild" expression of the binary [*oppositionsetzende*] thought activity of human beings. But with the cognitivist dilution of Durkheim's sociology he also relinquishes at the same time all possibilities of taking into account within the framework of his own theory the affective basis of archaic thought, to which precisely his attention was lead by his romantic interests. 29 And finally, the most fruitful discovery of his kinship studies, the insight namely into the extra-economic role of exchange, was actually obstructed more than expanded by the structuralist jargon. All these things considered, the concluding impression forces itself upon us that the structuralist equipment of the theory is not up to the imposing course set by its author. The romantic impulse that permeates Lévi-Strauss's work down to every nook and cranny cannot find adequate expression in the theoretical language of structuralism.<sup>30</sup>

Having reached this critical point in the discussion, yet one last background motive still comes into view that may have caused Lévi-Strauss to choose specifically structuralism as the methodological means for his romantic course. It consists in the intention gradually to divest the structuralist interpretive procedure of its scientific character and to turn it into a form of analogizing thinking. In such a direction point not least the indications which Lévi-Strauss gave in comments upon his gigantic project of a four-volume study of indigenous tribal myths. It is as if the author had finally dispensed with the indirect scientific demonstration of the natural framework of all social life and had with the help of structuralist procedures taken flight directly into the writing of a new myth. In this case, then, his romantically inspired ethnology would in the end have rid itself of every theoretical claim in order to transpose itself in one fell swoop into a cosmological world view.

Chapter 8  
Embodied Reason:  
On the Rediscovery of Merleau-Ponty

Once structuralism had achieved predominance within the intellectual community of France, silence descended around the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Inasmuch as the stubbornly difficult texts seemed to stand for everything which structuralism tried to hold in abeyance, there was just that much less reason to approach them. While Merleau-Ponty's thought thereby lost the widespread attention that it once enjoyed in France, it was from the beginning never able to achieve comparable notice in the Federal Republic. Here Merleau-Ponty aroused public interest only as a political philosopher and as a colleague to Sartre in the fifties and sixties. His phenomenological writings, on the other hand, initially found themselves overshadowed by Heidegger, and then, due to the growing influence of the analytic philosophy of language, fell almost completely into obscurity.

More recently, however, certain trends which have transformed the intellectual balance of power within philosophy look to put an end to this state of affairs. The retreat of French structuralism is the first of these tendencies: with it disappeared those intellectual barriers which, at least in France, stood until now in the way of a reflective return to Merleau-Ponty. The disintegration of dogmatism in the analytic philosophy of language is the second of these trends: it was accompanied by

a turn back to those pragmatic and phenomenological traditions of theory which still sought impartially to bring the totality of human relations and experience into view. Taking both developments together, it can come as no real surprise that just recently a series of books have appeared in the Federal Republic which have provoked a renewed discussion of Merleau-Ponty. There have been in the first place re-issues and new translations of his later writings which make manifest to us not only the inner dynamics of Merleau-Ponty's intellectual development but also the full extent of his philosophical activity. 1 There is, moreover, a collection of essays which seeks to document the "traces of Merleau-Ponty's thinking" in contemporary philosophy. With it we win a first overview of the subterranean intellectual influence exercised by his work during the past decades, in spite of all obstacles.2 And finally there have in the meantime also appeared studies by younger authors in which the attempt was made to apply Merleau-Ponty's writings to the problems of a critical theory of society.3 These books thereby allow insight from three directions into the undisclosed topical relevance residing in the work of Merleau-Ponty: we discover in him a philosophical author who sought his entire life for an escape out of the philosophy of consciousness, yet who in the end finally found himself entangled in precisely the theoretical problems and difficulties with which we are still wrestling today.

Without saying that Merleau-Ponty merely absorbed it from the atmosphere created by Sartre's thought, it must be acknowledged nonetheless that his philosophy also possesses a typically existential character. His path as well can only be understood as a philosophical self-exploration of individual existential experience and it accordingly proceeds via stations which are each characterized by the consideration of a new dimension of human experience. He shares with Sartre, first, the goal of an existentially oriented extension of Husserl's phenomenology. The application of the phenomenological method not merely to events of consciousness but also to the totality of individual existential experience offered itself as a possible avenue of escape from the bonds of classical philosophy of consciousness. Already in his early work, though, Merleau-Ponty turns this existential-phenomenological program which had unified an entire circle of French philosophers4 in an anthropological direction. He was from the beginning interested above all in the manner in which body and consciousness are in each moment of existence woven inseparably with one another. The anthropological formulation is a second point which from the very beginning allowed Merleau-Ponty to go beyond the intellectual circle of existential-phenomenology. Because his attempt to uncover the existential coupling

of body and mind lead him to venture out into phenomenal regions already empirically investigated by particular branches of science, he found himself compelled in the course of his philosophical investigations to integrate their conclusions on an equal footing. This interest in the specialized sciences, which gave an empirical flavor to his philosophy, was never later to desert him. In his last years he seized with the same enthusiasm upon the conclusions of psychoanalysis and ethnology as that with which he had appropriated Gestalt theory in his early work.

His engagement with the theory of Gestalt perception falls during the most productive phase of Merleau-Ponty's publishing career. Two of his definitive works emerge from this period: *The Structure of Behaviour*, completed in 1938, and *The Phenomenology of Perception*, published seven years later. 5 Both texts are located within a theoretical framework that is shaped by the assumption that, in principle, perception takes precedence within the human mode of experience. Perception constitutes the ground for all other life processes because humans obtain through it alone existential access to the world. Only this premise explains at all why in his first creative period Merleau-Ponty worked almost exclusively with the phenomenology of perception. It allowed him to understand the analysis of the perceptual event equally as the first and decisive step toward a phenomenology of human being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty carried out the investigation which was to achieve this in the form of a critique of both the empiricist and the idealist conceptions of perception. Gestalt theory, which he adopted with zeal, came at this point to his assistance. From it he developed the thesis that human perception is to be understood as being neither sensualistic, in the sense of the merely passive reception of sense perceptions, nor idealistic, in the sense of an active constitutive performance by the consciousness. Perception takes place much more as the process of the meaningful disclosure of world. The provisional meanings [*Sinnentwürfen*] that open up and drive the perceptual process, so to speak, from the inside outward are for their part rooted in the action intentions of an acting bodily subject. In perception humans disclose the world to themselves as a field of orientation for possible interventions by and virtual references for their bodily action.

These considerations in the theory of perception have rather considerable consequences for the determination of the relation of body and mind, a matter that within the framework of his phenomenological investigation of human existential experience is of primary concern for Merleau-Ponty. From them emerge the rudiments of a critique of that ontological dualism which within the Cartesian tradition had become a matter of philosophical self-evidence: when, namely, perceptual experience must be interpreted as a process in which humans meaningfully

disclose the world from the basis of their bodily action, then body and mind are no longer to be treated as separate entities, as is the case with the Cartesian tradition. Within the act of perception both are fused into a single performance [*Leistung*] and form together an indissoluble functional element of human existence. Merleau-Ponty has summarized the conclusions following from these reflections in the thesis that the human body itself always already constitutes a medium of cognitive acts. Consciousness is, he says, "being with the thing through the medium of the body." Wide-reaching, though none too clear, this train of thought, which was outlined once again by Alexandre Métraux in a collection for which he was a co-editor, fell in the meantime upon fruitful ground in the English speaking world. Here Merleau-Ponty's thesis was taken up and further developed into an epistemological conception by a circle of phenomenologically oriented philosophers, to which Michael Polanyi, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Charles Taylor belong. The basic ideas of this 'neo-phenomenological' approach were superbly outlined in an essay by Charles Taylor which was also printed in the collection mentioned just above. There, in an economical presentation, is summarized what today can be regarded as the productive potential of Merleau-Ponty's doctrine of perception. 6

The starting point is represented by that stage of reflection to which Merleau-Ponty's excursion through traditional conceptions of perception led: as perceiving beings we move always already within the horizon of an intimate bodily familiarity with the things around us. Of epistemological significance is then the question of what characteristics are to be attributed to the knowledge that is sedimented in a human's day to day certainties and familiarity with things. As Taylor shows, it cannot be the reflexive disposal over rules of action, but must rather be, so to speak, an intuitive mastery of performative acts [*Handlungsvollzügen*] that distinguishes such a kind of knowledge. Our daily tasks are facilitated by a kind of knowledge that is so much a bodily capacity that it can be neither explicated nor acquired through rules. It has its seat rather in the performative mastery of acts which themselves are the expression of a direct, even mimetic familiarity with things. The various works of the American neo-phenomenologists agree on the insight that it is this practical-bodily capacity itself that as a pre-theoretical source of knowledge forms the basis of our theoretical-conceptual knowledge. Their guiding idea is that of an 'implicit' or 'bodily' knowledge and their intent is that of a critique of the scientific self-understanding of contemporary natural science. 7

Merleau-Ponty could have pursued such implications and problems of his doctrine of perception himself in the later development of his work. Among the questions which he then would have had to have



addressed, the most urgent would have been that concerning the conditions of the elementary intersubjectivity of our perceptual experience. The political and academic circumstances of the post-war era, however, were the primary reason that he actually followed a different direction in his research efforts. The discussion developing with Stalinism and the growing interest in Marxism drove him into the sphere of political philosophy where, in the late 1940s, he became Sartre's comrade in arms. The questions around which his research at this point revolved were largely determined by the task of coping with the experience of Stalinism by means of a philosophy of history. He hoped to obtain an answer to the question concerning the extent of the mutability of historical-social processes from a theory of history, for which the reflections in his doctrine of perception regarding temporality and freedom had already provided the first rudiments. The outcome of this work, which in general represents a debate with the theory and praxis of Marxism, forms an only sketchily developed philosophy of history. From it an entire generation of left intellectuals received an impetus for the self-critical development of Marxism.

This phase of practical-political investigation, though, occupies in the overall development of Merleau-Ponty's thought rather more the position of a transitional period. What actually interested him since the beginning of the 1950s, and what gradually drove him beyond the framework of his earlier doctrine of perception, is found for the first time in the collection of essays *The Prose of the World*, which was broken off in 1952 and then first published after his death. In these essays Merleau-Ponty undertakes an attempt, in the form of an experimental testing of various theories of language, to investigate the function of language as a world disclosing medium of human expression. The path that leads from there into the late work is anything other than linear and goal-directed: it follows a movement of groping exploration in new fields of knowledge and is hemmed [*gesäumt*] by profound tensions rather than by any guiding insight. The most important stations along this way are marked, first, by a series of lectures that Merleau-Ponty held between 1952 and 1960 at the Collège de France 8 ; thereafter by the collection of essays *Signs* that appeared in 1960, selections of which have for some time already been available in German 9 ; and finally by the book *The Visible and the Invisible*, which, while remaining incomplete, was edited in 1964 by Claude Lefort, three years after Merleau-Ponty's death, and that at this time can likewise be found in an excellent German-language edition.

Merleau-Ponty is constantly driven on, as his work progresses through these stations, by two great themes. One of these is language as an expressive event [*Ausdrucksgeschehen*], which more and more deter-



mined the topical horizon of his work. He gradually detached himself from his original conception, according to which linguistic utterances stand under the primacy of perception and thus represent only a second-order human relation to the world, and in its place introduces the conception that language forms a primordial field of creative human expression. In their linguistic utterances humans disclose constantly anew heretofore unknown and unexperienced aspects of the world to their fellows. Humans are only capable of this because language represents for its part a symbolic order comprehending all subjects which by its very structure is open to permanent displacements in meaning and referential relations.

This thematic concentration upon language is accompanied, secondly, by a change in the determination of the character of intentionality. Merleau-Ponty falls increasingly into doubt over whether intentional acts can in fact still be assigned to an intending subject. An anticipation of the problem that thereby opens up is already afforded by some passages in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, which protrude like fragments of structuralist thinking into the course of this work's argumentation: "If I wanted . . .," it says in effect, "to bring the perceptual experience in all strictness to expression, I would have to say that one perceives in me, not that I perceive." From such reflections as these it is then no longer far to get to the thesis of emerging horizons of meaning that are in principle anonymous: that what is brought forth in perception or in speech acts respectively as a complex of meaning is not to be traced to the intentions of a particular subject but rather to a trans-subjective [*subjektübergreifende*] and unfathomable meaning event [*Sinngeschehen*]. In his last years of life Merleau-Ponty appears in facts, as his late writings now show, to have brought himself to this view. He may originally have received the impetus to this from the phenomenological observation of non-intentional processes of human action and experience. But it would first be his encounter with the structuralist currents in linguistics and ethnology, which he energetically engaged during the 1950s, which would have formed out of these observations the conviction that the meaning contained in human experience not only does arise arbitrarily but also is for its part constantly produced by a super-subjective [*übersubjektive*] and inaccessible meaning event.

It would not be entirely incorrect to see in this thought configuration the actual motive force of Merleau-Ponty's late writings; and when such motives are transferred to the region of language it also appears admissible to suspect, like Bernhard Waldenfels, that one finds therein an anticipation of structuralist ideas. 10 Paradoxically, then, Merleau-Ponty would in his last works have anticipated precisely that current of

thought as a result of which his own work later fell into oblivion. That this version need not necessarily be the case follows from some of the essays printed in the collection edited by Métraux and Waldenfels. There one finds documented three approaches to the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's late work; they are distinguished according to how they seek to interpret the difficult, indeed, often cryptic passages in which Merleau-Ponty characterized that anonymous power that confers meaning. The first of these approaches is characterized by the attempt, mentioned already, to interpret Merleau-Ponty's late writings as an anticipation of the structuralist school of thought; the anonymous power of meaning production would then have its seat in an anonymously construed speed event.

An essay by Marc Richir may represent the second and doubtlessly most influential interpretive approach; there the central direction of the late work is regarded as the turn to a kind of ontology of nature. 11 Richir understands Merleau-Ponty's last book, that is, the fragments about the Visible and the Invisible, as an attempt to advance via the methodological stance of a phenomenologist to a natural-sensible layer of being, from the 'wild' and uncontrollable movement of which all reality lives. The obscure concept of the 'flesh', of which Merleau-Ponty made continuously more use in his last years of life, is supposed to be directed toward such a cosmic principle that forms the ground of every being like a primordial element. It is in any case, though, difficult to understand the turn to a philosophy of nature which would have to accompany this attempt to determine the fundamental vital energies of all life processes because it would actually explode the framework of a phenomenology of human being-in-the-world. To be sure, the numerous indications of a thematic undercurrent akin to the writings of Bergson and Schelling which Waldenfels shows to be present in Merleau-Ponty's thinking make such tendencies toward speculation on nature biographically plausible, but they are not for that reason any more compatible with the fundamental existential-phenomenological approach. Though he may have numerous textual passages supporting his reading, Richir's interpretive approach comes into conflict with the intention, which Merleau-Ponty regularly expressed, to press forward by way of a phenomenological disclosure of the human body to an expanded concept of rationality. With the transition to a category of the 'flesh' within a philosophy of nature the level would be altogether abandoned upon which reason could still be located as an elementary dimension of human existence.

It is upon the intention of an expanded conception of rationality, on the other hand, that the third interpretive approach, represented in the collection by an essay from Gary B. Madison, is constructed.<sup>12</sup> Madi-

son places Merleau-Ponty's late work in the discursive landscape that today is staked out by the category of the postmodern. He also recognizes, to be sure, the speculative tendencies of the late work that press in the direction of a philosophy of nature, but establishes as a kind of counter-trend efforts toward an intersubjective theory of rationality. He is able to support himself in the course of his reading by referring to textual passages wherein Merleau-Ponty, in a manner reminding us of hermeneutics, treats the maintenance of a dialogue among humans as a fundamental requirement of truth. It would also be consistent with this reading that in the course of the development of his thought Merleau-Ponty had with increasing consistence called attention to the intersubjective constitution of human existence.

Whichever of these interpretive approaches may in the end be correct, they all lead toward theoretical positions that contribute decisively to the formation of the philosophical awareness of our day. Seen in this light, Merleau-Ponty had in the form of an inner dialogue already dealt in his late works with problems that today have become the objects of a public discussion.

Chapter 9  
The Struggle for Recognition:  
On Sartre's Theory of Intersubjectivity

Among the philosophers brought forth by our century, Sartre is in one sense certainly the most radical: his philosophical theory remained, with great self-evidence and in a purposive manner, oriented around the thoroughly secular existential experiences of his contemporaries. Though Sartre's philosophy may share with other projects within the phenomenological tradition the merit of having established even the most abstract categories by permanently recurring back to everyday life events, his approach nonetheless distinguishes itself from the others by virtue of the character of the everyday experiences taken into theoretical consideration. In his philosophy, as otherwise is the case only with Georg Simmel, it is the life activities of the everyday culture of a big city that come to philosophical prominence. As a source of experience for his philosophical argumentation, Sartre turned decisively to events and episodes that belong to the secular life of a big city. Thus in his writings public parks, cafés and subways form the physical background, while erotic adventures, scenes of jealousy and everyday conflicts form the material of action for his theoretical constructions. This self-evident modernity may account for the compelling attraction of Sartre's writings even to this day, but it is in any case certainly respon-

sible for the challenge which his philosophy from the beginning represented. Elements central to its doctrine, for example, always appear to have experiences on their side which we all are able to share, or which we all at least appear to share.

This is true in particular with regard to the theory of intersubjectivity which Sartre developed in the middle section of his principle existential-phenomenological work, *Being and Nothingness*. Its central theme depicts the conditions of the possibility of an intersubjective encounter between subjects. Its critical thesis is that of the inevitable negativity of inter-human relations. With this doctrine of negativity Sartre not only gave philosophical expression to a feeling of life predominant then as well as today: with his studies concerning alienated existence he had furthermore at the same time prepared the ground for a negative theory of intersubjectivity whose reverberations are still felt in the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan or in Jean-François Lyotard's theory of discourse. His analysis of encounters between humans can count as the hidden model of reference which continues to have an influence upon all poststructuralist attempts to expose intersubjective communication as a process of pseudo-communication between narcissistically or egoistically self-interested subjects. Contemporary skepticism with regard to the possibility of successful intersubjective relations consequently finds in Sartre's early doctrine of intersubjectivity not only a philosophical predecessor but also what must still count as its exemplary statement. This negativism represents today a challenge to a critical social theory oriented around the idea of communicative freedom all the more strongly as it not only appears to correspond increasingly with the actually existing communicative relations themselves but also with the self-description of subjects. The skeptical, indeed, negative assumption, that intersubjective relations to a certain extent are by their very nature doomed to failure has, namely, gradually penetrated as a background conviction into the life worlds of more and more social groups in our society.

I want to critically examine Sartre's theory of intersubjectivity by (I) briefly going over its philosophical basis, (II) trying immanently to criticize this argumentation and, finally, (III) presenting a brief overview of the further development of Sartre's theory of intersubjectivity.

## I

In his early work Sartre undertook the attempt to obtain an ontology of the social world from within the internal perspective of the con-

consciousness of an intentional subject. One significant motive for the entire undertaking is found in the self-assured goal of reconciling Heidegger's ontology of Dasein and Husserl's transcendental philosophy into a single approach. Though a series of insuperable difficulties were also connected with this basic idea alone, which in the meantime have become evident, the wealth of insight itself which Sartre unearthed in the course of working out this project is, today, impressive nonetheless. The two fundamental determinations of a phenomenological ontology are for him the Being-for-itself of an intentional subject and the Being-in-itself of a self-identical reality. With this first mode of being is meant the intentionality of a conscious subject that in its existential projects is continuously already beyond itself and thus never at one with itself. The second determination on the other hand designates the ontological constitution of a reality which in contrast to the essentially open facticity of the subject exists only as a self-enclosed matter of fact.

Sartre carries out the construction of the social world now in accordance with the principle theme of that negative performance through which the subject incessantly exceeds its chosen possibilities in order to be able to attain that unattainable condition of essentially quiescent and self-enclosed identity characteristic of the mode of being of things. It is not hard to see that in these premisses to his theory of subjectivity Sartre anticipated current trends within psychoanalysis. In the same way in which today Lacan and Castoriadis proceed in their psychoanalytic constructions from a constant but in principle unattainable desire on the part of the subject for a condition of monadic unity, <sup>1</sup> so the author of *Being and Nothingness* assumes that the subject seeks to compensate for its primordial lack of objectivity, of unity with itself, through ever new existential projects. The transition to the sphere of intersubjectivity follows for Sartre from the attempt to answer the question concerning how the subject, acting in a state of pre-reflective consciousness, is able to achieve a consciousness of itself at all.<sup>2</sup> The answer which Sartre gives reminds us in its initial stages of a figure of thought anticipated by Fichte and further developed by Hegel: this subject can achieve a consciousness of itself, that is, self-consciousness, only when it is able to recognize itself in another conscious subject as being just one such subject.<sup>3</sup> At the starting point of his analysis, however, Sartre reverses the direction of the motion of such an intersubjective encounter. For him it is not the situation of perceiving the other, but rather that of being seen by the other that represents the condition under which a subject is thrown back upon itself such that it can achieve a consciousness of itself. In that moment in which there appears in my field of perception another subject whose gaze is directed toward me, I am

able to grasp or to describe myself because I realize that for the other I am an object of description. 4 Thus it follows that the capacity for consciousness of myself is acquired by intersubjective means.

Now it may be the case that the passive construction of this situation is already an indication of the goal which Sartre set for himself with his analysis of human intersubjectivity. For him it has not to do, as was the case for that generation of German romantics, to which even the young Fichte also belonged, with the ideal of successful communication, but rather with the demonstration of its inevitable failure. From the basis of that situation in which a subject is surprised by the gaze of the other Sartre develops a logic of the necessary failure of interaction among humans. The course of thought with which he seeks to demonstrate this inner negativity of communication is, when the ontological premises of his argumentation are kept in mind, in no way lacking in consistency: when namely the subject's mode of being is characterized by an essential transcendence, then it must by virtue of being caught in the gaze of the other find itself fixed upon a single frame of its horizon of possibilities and thus finds itself thrown back into the self-enclosed facticity of an in-itself. Being seen by the other assigns to me only a single one of the permanently open possibilities of my self-project, makes me into a physical object in the world and reduces my temporal horizon to the present. Thus, for me, being seen by the other, as Sartre says pointedly, the "death of my possibilities."<sup>5</sup>

The threatened subject can for its part only escape such a danger of objectification, which reveals itself in the feeling of shame or in fear, by seeking in return to fix the alien subject onto a definite aspect of its possibility. In order not to be reified in being seen, I must to a certain extent reverse the direction of the interaction's relation of objectification by beginning for my part now to fix the subject seeing me onto a single one of the possibilities for this project. Sartre understands this situation of reciprocal objectification between subjects as the initial stage of a negative dynamic that destroys from the inside all forms of communication among humans. His analysis of intersubjectivity reaches with this demonstration the conclusion that the social world is constituted out of subjects' relations of mutual objectification. In order to provide additional phenomenological support for the outcome of his arguments, however, Sartre closes his analysis of intersubjectivity, as is known, with the attempt to expose concrete relations between humans as modes of mutual subjugation and instrumentalization: indifference, masochism, desire, but also love and language prove themselves to him, if they are only subjected to a sufficiently disillusioned and relentless observation, to be just so many forms of strategic action among subjects.

It is indeed above all the suggestive power of this phenomenologically highly penetrating and detailed analysis that makes it so hard to extract oneself at all from the course of Sartre's argument.

## II

If this brief reconstruction of Sartre's course of argument is correct, then the conclusion which his theory of intersubjectivity must reach is obvious: a relation of communicative agreement between subjects is not possible, since one of the subjects must constantly find herself in the objectified state of being-for-another. The fundamental relation between subjects relating to one another is, as Sartre also says, the conflict. Now in order to call Sartre's train of thought into question I shall not follow the path of a methodological critique which looks for the causes of the negativism in Sartre's theory of intersubjectivity in the conceptual means with which he pursues his phenomenological analysis of encounters between humans. In his impressive interpretation Michael Theunissen followed this route by pointing out that Sartre, despite all his insight, must arrive at a negative conclusion in his analysis of intersubjectivity because he is not able to free himself of the ontological premisses of transcendental philosophy. <sup>6</sup> In contrast I want in my critique to proceed immanently by trying to show that Sartre provides a reductionistic description of that key interactive situation of being seen. Only as the result of such a phenomenological reinterpretation will it come to light that it is the ontological premisses of his social ontology that deny him a conceptually adequate interpretation of the situation of interaction. Altogether my critique should represent the first stage in a critical analysis that would aim to show that, like many other authors, the young Sartre undercuts the level of reflection already once reached by Hegel in that he inconspicuously translates the model of an interactive "struggle for recognition" back into the less demanding model of a mere struggle for individual self-assertion.

When we remind ourselves of the initial situation with which Sartre begins the negative logic of interactive relations, so it first occurs to us that he does not appear to further qualify the look of the other. The only characteristic that is clearly attributed to the look directed toward me is that of fixing me onto a single action project and thereby reifying me as a subject. But we are in the habit, though, of describing looks differently and more richly. We say of looks that fall upon us that they are encouraging or disapproving, questioning or consenting, inviting or skeptical. If we attend to this variety of possibilities with which we nor-



mally describe looks, then it becomes immediately clear that they must not inevitably fix us simply to one particular goal of action. To the contrary, they can reaffirm us or call us into question concerning a particular manner of conducting ourselves. It would appear that we attribute evaluative meanings to looks which then frequently move us to react positively or negatively to the ascription we suspect is contained therein. Indeed, even if we go so far as to accept the model of perception that Sartre places at the foundation of his analysis of interaction it becomes clear that communicative encounters of the kind described possess a normative infrastructure that indirectly demand from us that we take some kind of position. That appears to be so clear already in the first phenomenological approach that the question virtually forces itself upon us why Sartre, who was clear enough to know all this, believed he could so completely abstract from this internal normative warp and weft of social interaction.

It should first be made clear, though, that in some places of his argument Sartre himself speaks of a subject becoming an object of evaluation. 7 Moreover, it seems that by choosing as a situation exemplifying the surprise of being seen the famous scene wherein a jealous man peering suspiciously through a keyhole suddenly becomes aware of looks directed toward himself, Sartre indicates that he himself wants to suggest that such encounters have to do with normatively significant interactions.<sup>8</sup> The feeling of shame with which that man reacts to the suspected look would then be, for example, a feeling of moral reaction [*moralische Gefühlsreaktion*] which, because he considers his act immoral, he experiences in the face of a virtual or actually present Other. Sartre, however, does not seriously pursue this line of interpretation, which would have taken as its point of reference the normative infrastructure of such interactions. Instead he leaves his own reference to the evaluative meaning of the look out of consideration and pursues further only that course which is guided by the undifferentiated talk of the reifying effect of being seen. To this extent he also speaks of shame not as a feeling of moral reaction, as would be suggested by his own example, but rather as a 'metaphysical' affective reaction [*'metaphysische' Gefühlsreaktion*] with which we react, so to speak, to the ontological shock of being reified.

It obviously cannot be the case that Sartre uniformly describes every case of being seen as a mode of reification simply because he has taken no note of the wealth of meaning with which we can experience the look. Rather, his reasons must be of the sort that would make it seem superfluous to differentiate at all between the different meanings contained in a look. One such reason can be seen, however, if we consider now the other side of this interactive relation which was opened by a

look, that is, the seen subject. This subject experiences each look, as Sartre depicts it, as an objectifying determination, as a 'death' of all his or her other possibilities for action. The particular meaning assigned to any one experienced look is of no relevance, since it is in the mere fact of being seen itself that the subject finds him or herself already fixed onto a single goal of action. That can only mean, however, that within his conceptual frame or reference Sartre appears to presuppose subjects who live continuously in such a state of experimental self-interpretive openness that they can bring their different action projects neither among themselves nor in their temporal sequence, neither horizontally nor vertically, into any particular ordered relation. Only for this reason, namely, must they see in every look a coerced fixation upon a particular goal of action, which they have in the permanent openness of their existential project always already transcended. If by contrast subjects were in the position to give to themselves a self-understanding that in that sense lasted beyond the moment, then the manner of each particular look would have to be of immediate relevance for them. They could then feel themselves reaffirmed or questioned, encouraged or criticized in their action-guiding self-understanding; and what is more important, upon the basis of their particular personal self-understanding they can for their part react positively or negatively to the interpretation of themselves contained in a look.

As soon as we additionally equip the conception of human subjects with a normative self-understanding, that is, with the capacity for a personal identity, there emerge in the interactive situation analyzed by Sartre two structural elements which are systematically omitted in his own phenomenological description. In the first place, the specific meaning attributed to the look of an Other would for a subject so construed no longer be trivial in the sense Sartre seems to suppose, but to the contrary would be of decisive importance. Depending upon his or her own self-understanding, such a subject will react differently to the presumed meaning of a look that meets him or her. This fact, however, itself indicates a second structural element which while not actually belonging to this situation of interaction, does belong to it virtually: the subject which understands him- or herself in terms of specific life-project must not necessarily react positively or negatively to the presumed attitude of expectation in the look of the Other, but is also in the position to make this presumed attitude of expectation itself to a theme of his or her reaction by resorting to the medium of linguistic understanding. This situation of being seen is thus for its part involved in the comprehensive medium of language, of which the subject seen can in specific cases make use. The possibility for such a linguistic continua-

tion of an interaction initiated through visual contact is, however, apparently excluded completely by Sartre.

All this seems to indicate that the only reason Sartre is forced toward a negatively formulated construction of human interaction is because the possibility of personal identity is already excluded in his fundamental categories. 9 His dual ontology does not allow persons to be grasped as subjects who for their part endeavor to integrate their different action projects into an enduring order maintained by their self-understanding. Sartre assigned the concept of identity so one-sidedly to the ontological sphere of the thing-like in-itself, that he can no longer even think of the possibility of a self-identical for-itself, that is, of the possibility for the foundation of a personal identity. If, on the contrary, he had possessed the conceptual means to understand subjects as self-identical personalities, then the interactive encounter would not have appeared to him as a struggle for the maintenance of the pure transcendence of the for-itself but rather as a struggle for the mutual recognition of the self-understandings that subjects by their very nature bring with themselves into every interaction. That, however, was the great insight which Hegel, spurred by Fichte, reached: he was able to interpret interactions as being such forms of the struggle for recognition which contained within themselves the potential for their own resolution because subjects were fully capable of reaching agreement concerning the mutual recognition of their claims to selfhood.

Interaction contains for Hegel as a positive counterpart to the moment of conflict the experience of the legitimacy of one's own claims and self-interpretations. For this reason every meaningful interaction is for him as a process also capable of leading beyond itself because, with the knowledge of their having been acknowledged, the subjects can always achieve more ambitious self-interpretations. Thus the struggle for recognition contains as it were a historical potential that presses out beyond the structures of the relations of recognition established at any given time.<sup>10</sup> One might say that Sartre regresses the Hegelian insight back to its Hobbesian origins: the ethical struggle for recognition becomes once again a mere struggle for survival. This survival, though, now existentially reinterpreted, is treated as the empty openness of the for-itself.

### III

I wish briefly to summarize. In a commentary upon the meaning of Sartre, Theunissen one stated, "Sartre pursues a theory of the ap-

parent negative [*scheinhaft Negative*], which is itself negative, insofar as it gives itself over [*sich hineinbegeben*] to the appearance." 11 Though this expression may have been coined principally with Sartre's understanding of the dialectic in mind, it is in my opinion equally valid regarding the negativism of the theory of intersubjectivity. This conception must be negative because it unreflectively assumes a false self-understanding of subjects to be a part of their own horizon of understanding. Only because Sartre accepts the self-understanding of a subject that interprets its being beyond the mode of being of an in-itself as a continuous not-being, as incessant openness, without being able to achieve an understanding of its own human identity, must he uniformly describe the being-seen by another as reification and therefore as a consequence have to describe every human interaction as an encounter between mutually objectifying subjects. Thus Sartre's early theory of intersubjectivity is also a theory of the apparent negative.

Admittedly, Sartre's theory develops in a different direction. To conclude I would like to propose the strong thesis that his theory of intersubjectivity followed the productive path of a gradual historicizing of the negative. Sartre gradually reworks his conception by increasingly historicizing and socially contextualizing the conditions for the strategic distortion of human interaction, that is, for the reifying effect of communication. He already opens the possibility for this with his essay 'On the Jewish Question', in which the grounds for the strategic and hostile attitude of the anti-semitic toward the Jew is sought in the temporally conditioned circumstances of the class situation of the petite bourgeoisie.<sup>12</sup> The second stage of this transformation of an ontological negativism of interaction into a historically circumscribed negativism of interaction is then represented by the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in which the fact of a lack of actual possibilities for the satisfaction of human needs is taken to be the cause for the relations of competition among humans. The last stage in this gradual transformation, finally, is formed by the great study of Flaubert in which, as I see it, the concept of the objective neurosis is supposed to designate nothing other than an historically generated pathology of communication. If that should be true, however, then Sartre would at the same time have moved in the course of the development of his theory to a conception of human intersubjectivity that is guided by the ideal of an uncoerced understanding among humans. I can find no other way to interpret those sentences with which Sartre answered a question from Alexandre Astruc: "Silence is actually reactionary insofar as it is a refusal to communicate, the wish to be made of stone, to be in-and-for-itself, to be a being that is like a statute that cannot answer because there is just silence in it, but a com-

pact, full, stony silence. The human made of stone does not answer. And that is precisely silence. A father, for example, who does not answer his children when they speak to him is really somebody who *establishes* himself as father [*sich als Vater setzt*]: a father need not answer his children, he need only express his wishes, or his desires, or his orders. Silence is precisely that. Communication, in contrast, necessarily includes truth and progress, as they say. They belong together. And it is natural to have trust in language." 13

## Chapter 10

### Rescuing the Revolution with an Ontology: On Cornelius Castoriadis' Theory of Society

At present only a few theories place themselves in opposition to the contemporary trend toward the impoverishment of social criticism. They stand out like islands in a sea of neoconservative diagnoses of the present era and fashionable prognoses of decline. Among the theories which in this sense oppose the spirit of the times, that of Cornelius Castoriadis represents one of the most imposing achievements. Castoriadis is a philosopher and psychoanalyst of Greek origin who for the last forty years has lived in Paris. His work is born of the same impulse which has nourished critical theories of society in our century from its beginning: the impulse to preserve the practical-political intentions of Marx's work by means of a resolute abandonment of its central basic assumptions. In three and a half decades of scholarly philosophical work, Castoriadis has detached himself from the theoretical framework of Marxism in order to be able to rescue for the present its practical core, the idea of a revolutionary transformation of capitalism. Thus his whole theory, like that of Herbert Marcuse alone among contemporary theories of society, circles around the problem of revolution. However, where the latter took the path of a psychoanalytic interpretation of human instinctual nature in order to find a way back to the revolution as

a theoretical and practical possibility, Castoriadis calls on a central element of traditional philosophy. For it is by means of an ontology that he believes himself able to win back the idea of revolution which has been repressed from consciousness in our times. Admittedly, the ontological theory which he works out for this purpose is anything but traditional. Instead of positing the categorical determination of being, Castoriadis takes the indeterminacy in principle of the social and natural world as his point of departure. His theory is rooted in the conviction that the actual mode of being of reality consists in a process of continuous creation of new forms of being. The widely stretched threads of his thought are as if laced together at a single point in this fundamental ontological thought, which he attempts to develop in the form of a critique of the logic of identity.

If therefore the centre of gravity of Castoriadis' theory consists of an ontology which is bold, if not rash in appearance, nevertheless the way in which he tries to ground his ontological starting point is determined by the contemporary state of the sciences. The theoretical significance and intellectual fascination of his work lie in the fact that Castoriadis develops the philosophical conception upon which he founds his theory as an answer to the difficulties with which above all the social sciences, but also the natural sciences are confronted. Like all of the important French philosophers of this century, Castoriadis derives his basic assumptions from a continuous confrontation with and constant reference to the contemporary sciences. Thus the path which led him to his ontology can be reconstructed as a process in which he tried to develop his leading practical-political idea, the idea of revolution, through and beyond the sciences.

I

Castoriadis' work is firstly and above all Marxist self-criticism. He occupies an important place in that critical undercurrent in the tradition of Marxist theory which stretches from Karl Korsch through Maurice Merleau-Ponty to E. P. Thompson. His first doubts about the traditional basic assumptions of Marxism were not primarily aroused by theoretical or philosophical considerations, but rather by the experiences of political praxis. After having personally experienced the authoritarian and repressive strategy of the Stalinist Communist Party of Greece, Castoriadis joined the Trotskyist Fourth International already during the second world war. Then, as a philosophy student in France, he quickly came into conflict with his own organisation, with which he could agree

neither in its estimation of Soviet society nor in its analysis of developed capitalism. In collaboration with Claude Lefort, a student of Merleau-Ponty, Castoriadis founded an oppositional circle which, after their common break with the Fourth International, became the intellectual base of the journal, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. From 1949 to 1966, this journal formed both the organisational nucleus and the spiritual centre of an extraordinarily fruitful examination of the theoretical and practical problems of Marxism.

The declared editorial goal was the formulation of a theory of revolution appropriate to contemporary conditions. The dictatorial suppression of popular uprisings in the GDR, Poland, and Hungary, the advancing process of bureaucratization in both social systems, the unexpected upswing of the capitalist economy and the growing influence of the culture-industrythese are the contemporary processes of development which had attuned the group's consciousness to the failure and obsolescence of traditional Marxism. Its self-understanding is stamped by the fact that, in its traditional form, Marxism no longer provides an adequate means for the task of revolutionizing developed societies. Therefore the common work of reflection for which the journal provided the medium was to clarify the theoretical presuppositions in a revival of Marxism's relevance. The perspective of a free, radically democratic socialism formed the normative core of this collective undertaking; its conceptual armory came from the Marxist philosophy of praxis. The journal's contributors carried out the collective goal by concentrating either on questions of empirical social analysis or on the philosophical problems of the interpretation of Marxism. However, only Castoriadis succeeded in weaving the two viewpoints together in his contributions in such a way that the outlines of a renewed theory of society began to emerge from the fragments. Moreover, his argumentation directly lead him not only beyond the limits of traditional Marxism, but beyond those of historical materialism in general.

Castoriadis departs from the consideration that the distorted form which socialism has taken on in the Soviet Union or in China must retrospectively cast doubt upon Marx's theory. A theoretical project which, like Marx's, aims at practical realization can not simply remain separate from its actual realization. "If Marxism is true, then according to its own criteria, its effective historical truth is to be found in the effective historical praxis which it has shaped, which means, finally, in Russian and Chinese bureaucracy. World history is the Last Judgment." 1 Admittedly, Castoriadis does not use this argument as the French "New Philosophers" do today, to crudely and one-sidedly accuse Marxism of totalitarian thought. On the contrary, he argues that in historically rare moments, Marxian theory has manifested a second,



revolutionary potential which has politically ignited in popular uprisings organised along the lines of council democracy. Therefore, already in the fifties, the "inner split" within Marxian thought constituted Castoriadis' actual theme. He discerns the productive, revolutionary core of Marx's theory in the but sketchily developed concept of a creative praxis which changes society; therein history is interpreted as a permanent process of population "of new forms of social life through the actions of the masses." These beginnings of a theory of praxis in Marx's work have left their clearest traces in the model of class struggle which interprets history as an open process of active conflict between the social classes. Moreover, this approach appeared together with a break from the traditional understanding of philosophy, insofar as it regarded philosophical theory as a historically rooted project which in principle could not be concluded, since history as a whole was to be grasped as an unending process of practical creation. Thus, simultaneously with the introduction of a new understanding of social life, in the best parts of his writings Marx exploded the framework of the old theories of history in seeking to understand his own theory as an immanent component of that creative praxis by which he held history to be driven.

However, according to Castoriadis, this radical new point of departure was put into question by a second theoretical model within Marx's work itself. In it, the insight into the creative character of social life is sacrificed to the postulate of a mechanical logic of social development. The human capacity for creative achievement is reduced to an ability for merely technical innovation. The praxis-provoking openness of the historical process is brought down to the mechanics of the development of the forces of production and the revolutionary project is finally reduced to positive science. This scientific position easily gained predominance in his work because, Castoriadis assumes, Marx had more faith in the positivistic spirit and technical optimism of his time than in his own intuitions. It did not merely overgrow the praxis-philosophical insights which make up Marx's true achievement, but quickly smothered them in the beginnings. With this victory of the objectivistic philosophy of history over the original philosophy of praxis, the theoretical preconditions were already created within Marx's own work which later allowed it to become a mere "ideology of bureaucracy," a powerful science of legitimation. The culmination of political history in Stalinism only transposes into reality practical consequences which were already latent in a theory which allowed society's creative life-process to be confused with a developmental logic of the forces of production.

This survey by itself demonstrates the extraordinary clear-sightedness of the interpretation of Marxism which Castoriadis elaborated step by step in his contributions to the journal. It anticipated by

two decades that criticism which today determines the philosophical discussion of Marx and Marxism. If Habermas' insight into "the secret positivism" of Marxian theory has today won widespread acceptance, Castoriadis had already formulated the same basic thought twenty years earlier. Castoriadis too regards the narrowing of an originally broadly understood concept of praxis down to an aspect of technical action as the real source of Marxian theory's immanent historical objectivism. For him too, a productivist misunderstanding hindered Marx in the full development of the themes of his philosophy of praxis and caused him to take refuge in a politically fateful mechanics of social development. But if we wish to pursue the construction of Castoriadis' theory of society further, then such agreements with the Marx-critique predominant today are of less significance than its specific differences from it. For Castoriadis develops what for him is the productive but suppressed core of Marxian theory in a direction different from the one which has become customary. The viewpoint from which he attempts to unify his comprehension of the repressed element of Marx's philosophy of praxis is not that of the structure of intersubjectivity, but rather that of the creative dimension of social action.

In his critique of Marx, Castoriadis only prepares the ground for this particular interpretation of the category of praxis, to which he connects the construction of an entire theory of society. As we have seen, in the case of revolutionary action, he repeatedly emphasizes the aspect of its creative production of a new social order. He refutes historical determinism with an anthropological reference to the special human capacity to continually give new answers to situations which themselves remain constant. And to the conception of base and superstructure, he stubbornly opposes that projective-creative potential which appears to be inherent in human cultural achievements. These scattered considerations alone outline a category of social action centred on the dimension of the creative production of symbolically mediated meaning. However, Castoriadis only arrives at a systematic explication of the type of action which he has in mind by a detour leading through a distinctive renewal of the Aristotelian concept of praxis.

## II

Castoriadis makes a peculiar use of the Aristotelian concept of praxis, whose implications for social philosophy Hannah Arendt once more opened up to contemporary consciousness with her book, *The Human Condition*. Certainly, like Hannah Arendt, he at first takes up the

crucial distinction between *praxis* and *poesis*: in contrast to all technical activities which are oriented towards a pre-given purpose, practical action represents that special form of an activity which carries its purpose in itself. While *poesis* aims at producing a product external to itself, *praxis* is realized in its own performance. Castoriadis uses the customary examples to elucidate this fundamental distinction: political praxis, medical and educational action, represent for him in exemplary fashion activities whose goal, in contradistinction to all forms of purposive-rational production, lies in the practical exercise of the activity itself. However, those characteristics which Castoriadis additionally ascribes to these modes of action are sufficient to shatter the Aristotelian frame of reference. Thus, for him, beyond its character as performance, *praxis* is characterized both by a particular form of action-orienting knowledge, as well as by an immanent reference to the autonomy of the individual. In the active performance of *praxis*, knowledge takes the form of a project which can be constantly corrected and extended according to the conditions of practical experience. It is not the application of a closed theory, but rather the continuous extension of an anticipatory knowledge in the experimental performance of action which here provides the model according to which knowledge and action relate to one another. In addition, in the performance of *praxis*, the participants are, in a special way, always present as autonomous beings. Practical actions not only principally address the autonomous subject in the other, but also are themselves structured in such a way as to further promote autonomy. "One could say that, for *praxis*, the autonomy of other(s) is simultaneously end and means. *Praxis* is that which has the development of autonomy as its end and at the same time uses autonomy as a means to that end." 2

Even with these expanded definitions, Castoriadis has not yet explicated the full content of the meaning of the concept of *praxis* which he had already anticipated in the development of his Marx-critique. If *praxis* was there intended to refer above all to the creative formation of new worlds of meaning, now the same concept designates in the first place the purposeful performance of action aiming at autonomy. Thus Castoriadis only completes the explication of the concept when, in a last step, he introduces revolutionary action as the original figure of *praxis* aiming at autonomy and emphasizes its innovative aspect: the activity of revolutionary groups is guided by the creative project of a new social order "organised and oriented towards the autonomy of all."<sup>3</sup> It becomes evident that, in this model of action, the normatively enriched concept of *praxis* is brought together with a concept of the force of collective imagination. *Praxis* then appears to be the unforeshortened form

of social action in which, drawing on their creativity, social groups project new social worlds which aim at the expansion of autonomy, and seek to transpose them into reality by means of revolution.

To be sure, as soon as it has been transformed into such an ambitious model of action, the concept of *praxis* can no longer be introduced simply as the categorical basis of a general theory of society. The revolutionary activity to which the reformulated concept of *praxis* now refers represents a social situation far too exceptional to be able to be considered a constitutive element of social life. How then is a sustainable concept of society to be developed from the newly won model of action? The theoretical decision with which Castoriadis answers this basic problem in the starting point of his theory of action is of decisive significance for the elaboration of his concept of society. It consists of the systematic generalization of revolutionary *praxis* to represent the form of movement of social reality as such. Castoriadis strips the exceptional temporal and social quality away from the idea of revolutionary *praxis* by giving it the ontological status of a supra-personal process of creation. However, the arguments with which he justifies this ontological rescue of his approach to the philosophy of *praxis* stem from a critique of the contemporary social sciences.

### III

If the first phase of Castoriadis' intellectual development is determined by the debate with Marxism, then its second phase is determined by a no less intensive preoccupation with the contemporary social sciences. Additionally, from the beginning of the sixties, psychoanalysis gained a growing significance for his work. Castoriadis sees the chance to find a sociotheoretical foundation for the basic praxis-philosophical insights of his Marx-interpretation in an immanent critique of the dominant social sciences. Functionalism, represented by Parsons, and the structuralism originated by Lévi-Strauss are the outstanding positions among those theories which have particularly stimulated his consideration. From functionalism, in a concise, but convincing critique, Castoriadis gains insight into the symbolic infrastructure of society. 4 Every attempt to explain the origin and existence of social institutions with reference to their functional contribution to the maintenance of a social order ignores the fact that the constitution of this order is always secured only through social meanings. In societies, one cannot find functions which as such are indispensable for their survival and which could serve to objectively define the continued existence of a social system.

Rather, the criteria for the survival of a society depend upon those interpretations and worldviews which enable a form of social life to confer meaning and order on itself in the first place. Accordingly the institutions of a society are also carried by such modes of interpretation. If the symbolic constitution of the social order is to be taken into account, they must not be regarded as functionally adequate instances of the system's self-maintenance, but rather as unique embodiments of historical projections of meaning.

With this argumentation, Castoriadis accomplishes that turn to linguistic theory which was first carried into the social sciences by the analytical philosophy of language and philosophical hermeneutics: society is understood as symbolically mediated relations of meaning in which institutions take on the special role of conferring social validity upon the dominant projections of meaning by means of a "rigid connection of the signifier and the signified." 5 In order to be able to further illuminate the rules to which these connections are subject, Castoriadis turns to structuralism. He correctly sees in the structuralist movement a theoretical position which converges with his own critique of functionalism, at least in the basic intention to analyse a society's symbolic relations in terms of their inner order of signification. Indeed, in the writings of Lévi-Strauss, on which Castoriadis concentrates, one can still recognize as one of the original motives of structuralism the intention to revive the social sciences, which had become ossified with functionalism, by demonstrating the *sui generis* logic of the symbolic systems of society.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, Castoriadis only follows structuralism in this motive of its point of departure. He raises objections to the way it then carries out its internal analysis of the social order of signs, objections which depend on the further development of the premises of his philosophy of praxis.

Saussure's general theory of signs serves structuralism as the methodological model which is to be imitated by the social sciences in order to make possible an analysis of social systems of symbols from an objectivistic perspective. The train of thought which is to justify this transposition is simple: if, as posited by Saussure, the meaning of systems of signs results solely from the particular arrangement of the elementary sign-units among one another at any given time, then clearly those social relations of meaning which have found expression in cultural systems of symbols can also be disclosed by an analysis merely of the constellation of their individual symbolic elements. That is, as soon as cultural systems of symbols are considered from the perspective of a generalized semiology, they appear to be interpretable without any reference to states of affairs external to the relations between signs. How-

ever, this is precisely the thesis which Castoriadis resolutely opposes. He insists that all complexes of social symbols must of necessity refer to a nucleus of significance which is prior to all signs and from which they acquire their particular form of meaning in the first place. Each symbolization exists on the basis of its reference to something which in some form or other must be "given" to humans in their world of experience. "The assertion that meaning is purely and simply the product of a combination of signs is not tenable. One could just as well say the reverse, that the combination of signs is a product of their meaning, for in the end the world does not consist solely of people who interpret the speech of others. In order that there be interpreting others, people must already have spoken, and speaking means precisely: choosing signs, hesitating, repeating oneself, correcting the signs already chosen according to their meaning. . . . We maintain therefore that meanings exist which are relatively independent of their vehicles, the signifiers, and which play a role in the selection and organisation of these signifiers." 7

This objection to structuralism represents the bridge to Castoriadis' own attempt to analyse the logic of social symbol-formation. If the social meaning of a symbolic order does not result simply from the combination of its elements, but rather only from its relationship to a state of affairs which it endeavours to bring to representation, then it is imperative that social-scientific analysis determine the process underlying that symbolic relationship more closely. For this purpose, Castoriadis distinguishes between three domains of phenomena which can act as the referents of meaning in the social formation of symbols: the spheres of the perceptible, of the thinkable and of the imaginable. However, while he sees the first two spheres as contributing to the process of constituting of symbolic relations of meaning only to the extent that they may serve as empirical or rational fields of reference for it, the sphere of the imaginable is for him its central element. For Castoriadis is convinced that each social formation of symbols must inevitably be related to some state of affairs which owes its existence neither to empirical observation nor to rational construction, but rather has its genesis in an act of creation. The symbolic orders of all societies have their actual centre of meaning in a world which is not merely perceived or rationally constructed, but rather in an imagined referential world, an *imaginary*. From it, a society creates the interpretations and explanations which give it a unified meaning.

Castoriadis explains what he means by this important thesis firstly by way of instructive examples. Thus he shows that the origin of religious symbolic systems was bound to the semantic production of a di-

mension of meaning for which there could have been no points to anchor it at all, either in the world of the perceptible or that of the thinkable. That is, however the "God" of monotheistic religion was empirically imagined or conceptually constructed, this new designation always opened up a horizon of meaning which had previously been completely unknown and which thereafter could become the organizing centre of society's symbolic relations. 8 Equally illuminating, though less self-evident, is Castoriadis' second example: in his view, the process of capitalist reification which Marxism brought to attention also presupposed an act of social creation of meaning through which that which had been previously regarded as a human individual received the imaginary meaning of a thing. For subjects could be imagined as thing-like quantities, so that they could be turned into mere labour power, only at that historical moment in which this new reference of meaning had been produced and made the focal point of an entire symbolic order.<sup>9</sup> By way of a collection of such examples as these, Castoriadis comes to the generalizing conclusion which comprises the substance of his thesis: every society consists of symbolically mediated relations of meaning which exist on the basis of reference to an imaginary horizon of significance. This domain of the *imaginary* acts as a schema which organises categories and marks out the frame of the imaginable. It determines how a society "sees, experiences and shapes its own existence, its world and its relationship to these." These imaginary horizons of meaning which, in a given epoch, hold together the social modes of interpretation like "invisible cement" are produced by ever new acts of creation of meaning. The capacity developed within them is that of "a power of imagination" which is capable of bringing forth as an image something that neither is nor has been.<sup>10</sup>

In this concept of the 'power of imagination,' which he traces back to Aristotle,<sup>11</sup> the central motif which already had a fundamental importance in Castoriadis' philosophy of praxis is once more discernable. In the earlier work historical development was determined by the creative world-interpretations of revolutionary groups. Here the same role is undertaken by those acts of creation of meaning which by themselves bring about the origination of ever new forms of the *imaginary*. In both cases the productive core of social development consists of the forces of imagination, of the creative production of new horizons of meaning. However, now, after the debate with structuralism, the bearers of these acts of generation of meaning are no longer social groups, but anonymous processes instead. Thereby, however, these creative achievements entirely forego the character of practice as social action, and increasingly



take on the characteristics of an impersonal occurrence. This constitutes the point of departure for the ontology which Castoriadis elaborates on the basis of his critique of the contemporary social sciences.

#### IV

Castoriadis develops this ontology, at whose centre will stand the anonymous occurrence of the creation of meaning, in the form of a critique of the "logic of identity." Under this concept he gathers together those premises which he is convinced that Marxism, functionalism and structuralism shared: their common intention was to emphasize the elementary invariants of social life and thereby in principle also to tear them free of the process of historical change. The common point of convergence of these theories thereby proves to be an ontological prejudice in favour of the scientific determinability of social historical being. To be sure, in this principle of social-scientific thought Castoriadis now sees only a single instance of the application of an ontological tradition which exerts a very much greater and far older influence. The ontological foundations upon which Western thought in general is anchored rest on the intention of the logic of identity to fix social and natural reality in categories. "For twenty-five centuries, Greek-Occidental thought constitutes, elaborates, amplifies and refines itself on the basis of this thesis: to be means to be something determinate (enai ti), to say means to say something determinate, (ti legin), and, *nota bene*, to say the truth means to determine the saying and the said according to the determinations of being, or to determine being according to the determinations of saying, and, finally, to ascertain that the one class of determinations coincides with the other." 12

The essential features of modern ontology can be explained without too much effort in terms of the principle of the logic of identity. Castoriadis utilizes mathematical set theory to develop the rules which in their entirety serve as a formal system of reference for that ontology. For him, those operations which are necessary for the formation of a set of clearly distinguished objects simultaneously also represent the cognitive schemata with whose help reality is constructed as a structure of specifiable entities according to the logic of identity. If thereby traditional ontology has its logical foundation in the operations of forming sets, then its practical roots are to be found in the concerns of the reality of social life. Specifically, Castoriadis derives those basic schemata which are presupposed by identity thinking from those practical tasks which confront socialized human beings in the reproduction of their



life. In virtually pragmatic fashion he asserts that the performances of "saying" and "doing," upon which social life fundamentally depends, always necessitate the application of rules of operation which are set down in the rationality of the logic of identity. Using the concepts of ancient philosophy, Castoriadis calls these elementary human performative achievements, without which the reproduction of society would be impossible, *legein* and *teukein*.<sup>13</sup> According to his argument, the performance of both activities, discursive speech and technical action, brings about an identifying determination of states of affairs and thereby also a categorial fixation of being. For speech and work to be possible, reality must be specified in clearly determined entities. Therefore the ontology of the modern period which is centered in the logic of identity is to be understood as an unreflected generalization of those modes of thought based on the postulation of identity which are necessarily carried out in everyday action.

However, precisely because of this supposition, that is, because Castoriadis holds the logic of identity to be "an essential and indestructible dimension . . . of language,"<sup>14</sup> the problem which he sets himself is all the more difficult to solve. As we have seen, his reconstruction of the modern logic of identity had the task of exposing those ontological premises which had hindered theories of society from Marx to Lévi-Strauss from apprehending the creative process of production of imaginary horizons of meaning. Indeed, as Castoriadis has attempted to show in individual studies, the ontological presuppositions of the logic of identity proved to be theoretical obstacles not only for the social sciences, but for the natural sciences as well. In both branches of science, traditional ontology poses insuperable barriers to the development of theory.<sup>15</sup> For the social sciences that can only mean that as long as the premises of the logic of identity, which have unfolded their effects right up to Lévi-Strauss, are not fully shaken off, the fundamental idea which is contained in the concept of the "Imaginary" cannot be adequately developed. The further productive development of social theory presupposes a radical reshaping of our understanding of being. However, how can reality be thought other than according to the determinations of traditional ontology if we already make use of them in discursive speech? How is the logic of identity to be overcome if at the same time it is regarded as the presupposition of all meaningful speaking?

Castoriadis realizes that he must answer this question before he can actually tackle the formulation of a new ontology. Because he himself had previously emphasized that identifying thought constitutes an inescapable dimension of intersubjective speech, he knows only too well that we "can neither think nor speak . . . entirely outside of the

boundaries of the logic of identity." He states categorically that "only by use of this logic can this logic be put in question." 16 Castoriadis thus conceives the first step of his own project in the manner of an immanent deconstruction: the revision of our traditional understanding of being is to begin, not with a direct demonstration of another mode of givenness of being, but with a tentative inquiry into that which cannot be represented within the premises of a logic of identity. It is the idea of "otherness," of "difference" which yields the connecting thread of this immanent critique: as long as reality is conceived as a structure composed of invariant elements, processes of development can only be thought about as successive rearrangements of those invariant elements, not however as the production of actually new entities. Castoriadis illustrates this with our experience of time: temporal processes, in fact time itself, are customarily understood according to a spatial schema, as a linear succession of discrete points in time. The logic of identity brings about a reduction of the conception of time to that of space, by which precisely the essence of time, the always unexpected but nevertheless continuous breaking through of new givens and forms, is removed from view. This dimension of time could in fact only be disclosed if reality were no longer viewed as a structure of predetermined entities, but rather as a self-impelled process capable of new creation. There is such a time "only if that which emerges . . . has not been constituted in already existing being, if the new is not a mere actualization of a predetermined potential."17 The deficiencies of models which assimilate time to space thereby betray the conceptual limits which an ontology conceived within the logic of identity must come up against. Within its framework, it is impossible even to think the creative production of new orders of being at all.

Surprising coincidences with Bergson's "philosophy of life" can already be discerned in this critique of conceptions which reduce time to space. These are even more pronounced when Castoriadis proceeds from the deconstructive to the constructive part of his ontological project. Like Bergson in his last works, Castoriadis too finally undertakes an attempt to transcend the framework of a merely negative ontology in order to make creative reality visible as such. In the end, the veil with which modern ontology has shrouded reality is after all to be raised, so that the being of existence may directly manifest itself. Whereas at this point Bergson admittedly resorts to the introduction of a special means of knowledge, the intuition, which is supposed to allow us to immerse ourselves directly in the life-stream of the *elan vital*, Castoriadis is more restrained methodically, and more cautious theoretically. According to him, we cannot transcend the limits of the logic of identity through a

single, spontaneous act of knowing, but rather through the argumentative course of demonstration entailing a descriptive analysis which step by step passes over into a metaphysical language without completely dispensing with the disciplining accompaniment of scientific experience. However, on the other hand, the metaphors through which this course of argumentation proceeds are the same as those which Bergson already used in his day to describe reality freed of end-serving mystifications. As in the philosophy of life, here too being appears as an eternal "flux of becoming," as an "unceasing flow" or as a continuous stream of new creation. 18 However, Castoriadis reaches the real goal of his argumentation only with the metaphorical conception of the "magma." Resembling the Bergsonian category of the *elan vital*, it refers to that creative, continuously pulsing mass of energy which is at the basis of all that is given "imagination, nature, meaning."

V

As adventurous as these ontological speculations appear, many of the arguments which Castoriadis invokes to justify them are instructive and convincing. This holds above all for the two scientific domains of phenomena upon which his argumentation focuses. Both of them, the individual psyche and human language, are for him regions of being in which the existence of that continuous stream of meaning should be capable of easy demonstration.

Castoriadis looks at inner psychic life from the perspective of a psychoanalysis schooled by Lacan. He had once received his analytical training within the horizon of this school of thought, and his own interpretation of psychoanalysis still draws upon it, even if he has since come to vehemently distance himself from the modish allure of the Lacanians.<sup>19</sup> Castoriadis starts from the idea of a primordial unconscious of the subject, which consists of an inner psychic experience of a perfectly undifferentiated unity with the world. However, this monadic condition, in which libidinous strivings are directed only by the pleasure principle, is violently interrupted as soon as the child is capable of perceiving objects independent of the ego. The subject reacts to the "loss of the unity of its world" with which the process of socialization begins, by thenceforth unceasingly attempting to restore the monadic condition in phantasy, but without ever being able to actually reach this instinctual goal. All the needs which it will develop in later life can thus in a certain sense be understood as substitute-formations for that first "wish for perfect unification." The latter constitutes the instinctually dynamic

source of power which drives humans on in the incessant formation of phantasies. Precisely this represents for Castoriadis the inner psychological process of the permanent production of imaginary meanings. He interprets those ever-new instinctual phantasies, in which the eternally unfulfilled primordial wish gains unconscious expression, as a "stream of representation and affect" which always drives humans beyond the horizons of meaning relevant to them at any particular time. As Castoriadis pointedly formulates it, the human subject is then nothing other than an "incessant flow" of representations; it acquires its capacity for technical action, for *teukein*, by detaching useful ideas from the stream of meaning and giving them an artificially enduring internal fixity. 20

Castoriadis argues in a similar way in the case of human language. Here he initially relies on the results of his critique of structuralism to be able to demonstrate in a first step that linguistic meanings must in principle be determined through relationships to states of affairs which are in some way given, that is, to referents. However, secondly, Castoriadis asserts that these "relations of designation" are by their nature open in two directions: just as each linguistic sign always already finds itself in an unspecifiable contextual interrelationship with all other signs, so too does each designated object always exist only as a not strictly delimitable element of an entire field of given conditions. Thus, in linguistic description, we always make reference to something which is in itself unspecifiable, with the help of signs which in principle are contextually open, without ever being able to fix our practice of designation in a rule, because this would once again presuppose the application of that same unspecifiable relation of designation.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Castoriadis concludes from this that human language has an essentially open character and thereby an interminable potential for creativity. Like inner psychic life, so too do linguistic meanings find themselves in the condition of a continuous flowing and streaming. In the happening of language new horizons of meaning constantly break forth without this creative process ever possibly reaching an end.

If we follow Castoriadis to this point and postpone the objections which obviously can be brought against his model of socialization,<sup>22</sup> the question arises of how, proceeding from the two phenomenal domains treated, one can draw conclusions about a creative capacity attributed to reality as a whole. Both the world of linguistic meanings as well as inner, psychic life represent regions of reality whose creative potential rests, even if not on intentional performances, nevertheless certainly on the practical co-performance of human subjects. To be sure, human beings do not have a system of linguistic meanings or their own instinctual process simply at the disposal of their purposive strivings, but rather

discover themselves always already within these powers which transcend their intentionality. However, conversely, those creative achievements of meaning which occur in the form of linguistic innovations or formations of phantasy are entirely inconceivable without reference to the subject's cognitive or psychic energies. The human being is not the conscious author, but nevertheless is the vehicle of such creative productions. Therefore the arguments which Castoriadis has presented until now only provide the theoretical basis for an "ontology" of the human, social world, but not for the processes of being in general. With their help, one can reconstruct the psychological and cultural conditions necessary to provide for a constant openness within societies, even for a fluidity of symbolic contexts of meaning. The illimitably rich creativity of human language and the uncontrollable phantasy-activity of human instinctual life, everyday linguistic innovations and phantasy-formations, could then be regarded as the inconspicuous prefigurations of a power of social imagination which, in exceptional circumstances, finds an outlet in collective acts of creation of meaning. In such rare historical moments when new horizons of meaning are generated or new institutional structures founded, collective practice, which elsewhere occurs implicitly in all social life, acquires a fully conscious form.

However, Castoriadis is now no longer interested in conclusions of this type which would offer a path out of the difficulties of his original philosophy of praxis. Because all of his efforts are now devoted to a comprehensive ontology, he regards both of the argumentative steps depicted as only the preliminary stages of a theory of creative being as such. The creativity of human language and of libidinal, instinctual life are thus for him only the representatives in the inner world of a process of creation which is an attribute of reality in general. However, he accomplishes the transition from the human social world to the being of things with the aid of a sleight-of-hand: in the concept of "magma," like Bergson in the *elan vital*, he carries out a "substantialization" of creative achievements which, for good reasons, we can primarily ascribe only to the human world. Because Castoriadis regards a substantial force as the source of all creative production, precisely the force of the "magma," he can in the end speak of a "magma of being" just as he can speak of a "magma" of the stream of linguistic meanings. Thus, fleeing from its own radicalism, his theory of society leads in the end into a metaphysical cosmology which today can scarcely be discussed with rational arguments.

## Chapter 11

### The Fragmented World of Symbolic Forms:

#### Reflections on Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture 1

Although Pierre Bourdieu's major works have been regularly translated into German and English, his theoretical work is only just beginning to make an impact.<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu's most wide-ranging and no doubt most important investigation to date, *La Distinction* (1979), is only now receiving attention in West German, British and American social science in the wake of recent translations (Bourdieu 1982, 1984). The belated response to Bourdieu's work may be the price to be paid by one who does not comply with the traditional models of sociological theory construction in any case Bourdieu's work does not fit the schemata customarily employed by most social scientists. From the start Bourdieu has focused on the world of symbolic formations through which social life represents itself; he is interested in the sphere of cultural customs and symbolic forms of expression which a hard-boiled Marxian tends to summarily dismiss as merely a by-product of social reproduction. Bourdieu however remains a Marxist, if this label still has meaning today. He has not been seduced by fashionable critiques of Marxism and has made one of the most controversial parts of Marxian theory, the concept of class struggle, a principal theme in his own work. Bourdieu at-

tempts to analyse the social structure underlying the concept of class struggle so that a subsequent study of cultural reality may be seamlessly adjoined. His theory is thus intended to bring together two elements which the customary classificatory spirit of sociology considers incompatible. He has unremittingly devoted himself to a domain thus far delegated to phenomenologically oriented or psychoanalytically schooled sociology, using the conceptual apparatus of a theory traditionally granted a certain legitimacy only for the study of socio-economic conditions. But how both elements coalesce into a single unified theory, how Bourdieu brings the concept of class struggle and the study of symbolic forms of expression together into a theory of late-capitalist culture, which is the form taken by his large-scale study, *Distinction*, can better be understood after the various stages of his theory construction have been retraced step by step.

I

Readers could already gather from his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1972), for too long a time a well-kept secret among social scientists, that here was someone who had set out on his own to develop a theory of society. In this book, a compilation of anthropological essays from the nineteen fifties and sixties, Pierre Bourdieu deviated in a original way from the doctrine of structural anthropology at that time dominant in France. Like many French social scientists of his generation, Bourdieu stood fully under the sway of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Bourdieu's preliminary studies as an anthropologist in French Colonial Algeria were informed by the basic tenets of structural anthropology; the marriage rites as well as myth-telling of the Kabyle he studied were interpreted on the linguistic model as closed semiotic systems whose structural order was supposedly related to the constitutive laws of the human mind. The second chapter of the essay collection in particular provides an impressive example of this Lévi-Straussian orientation. Contrary to the structuralist expectations of a Lévi-Straussian however, Bourdieu soon encountered discrepancies in his research: indeterminacies and inconsistencies in the system of symbolic classifications by which tribal members ordered their social reality and collective history. The linguistic representation of kinship relations or tribal rites did not universally follow that syntactic rigour with which Lévi-Strauss believed symbolic formations were dictated. These empirical contradictions shook the foundations of Bourdieu's structuralist beliefs and provided the impetus for him to work out his own

conception, which to some extent took him back to just that type of social-scientific functionalism which Lévi-Strauss' approach had been aimed against. 3

To explain for himself the persistent vagueness of the symbolic figures, Bourdieu now assumed that the natives' application of a collectively shared classification system at any given time depended on the constellation of interests dictated by the social hierarchy of the tribal community. Both the symbolic representations, as well as the accumulation of economic goods, then assume a function in the competition for status between the kinship groups which constitute a tribe. The discrepancies and inconsistencies manifested in the symbolic classifications of natives have their common origin in the fact that competing kinship groups within the tribal society sought to interpret the intersubjectively binding symbol systems differently according to the current constellation of interests in order to improve their own standing in the hierarchy. A group, for example, which succeeded through a skilful handling of kinship classifications in claiming an esteemed ancestor as its own, could thereby decisively raise the value of its own standing in the tribal community.

As his mode of argument indicates, Bourdieu is guided by utilitarian motifs in overcoming structuralism. He proceeds from the assumption that symbolic constructions, on which the anthropologist focuses in order to study the social order of tribal societies, should also be conceived as social activities performed from the point of view of utility maximization. He thus seems to have torn down a principal pillar of the Lévi-Straussian theoretical edifice: the classification systems natives use to order their reality are no longer to be regarded as the products of an automatic logic of the human mind, but are to be understood as the results of the utility-oriented strategies of social groups. In place of the problematic assumption of universal structural principles of the human mind held in anthropological structuralism, Bourdieu offers a theory of action which analytically puts symbolic practices on the same level as economic practices, so that the former can be interpreted as strategies in the competition for prestige or standing in the social hierarchy. Both forms of activity, symbolic representation as well as economic accumulation, serve as means by which the social groups can improve their social standing. Of course, this utilitarian transformation of anthropological structuralism was based from the outset on an unclarified problem still to be found in Bourdieu's theory today: does Bourdieu regard the symbolic struggles on which he focused as disputes over the interpretation of an intersubjectively recognized system



of classification and value, or does he regard them as struggles for the establishment of group-specific ways of classification, which totally lack the common bond of a social consensus?

Already in his anthropological work Bourdieu had attempted to formulate the basic concepts underpinning his critique of structuralism in the form of an "economy of practices"; his idea is that "all actions, even those understood as disinterested or non-purposive, and thus freed from economic motives, are to be conceived economically" as actions aimed at the maximization of material or symbolic gain (Bourdieu 1972, p. 235). Already in the nineteen sixties Bourdieu had set out in the spirit of this economic approach to sociological theory to reformulate the basic concepts of his analysis in terms of the Marxian theory of capital. Categories for the description of the domain of symbolic practices were adjusted to categories traditionally tailored solely to the economic sphere so that he could ultimately speak of "symbolic" as well as "economic" capital. By "symbolic" capital he meant metaphorically the sum of cultural recognition or prestige which an individual or social group could acquire through a skilful manipulation of the system of social symbols.

Bourdieu's empirically mediated critique of anthropological structuralism then led to the application of a form of utilitarianism to symbolic practices and the concept of "habitus" is its logical extension. The concept of habitus provides the means by which we can move from the view of a profit motive permeating social life in its entirety to the level of actual social practices and orientations to action. For to avoid having to assume, as a consequence of an underlying utilitarian theory of action, that acting subjects possess the actual intention of utility maximization, Bourdieu proceeds from the idea that the contingently located utility calculus of social groups are manifest in their collective perceptual and evaluative schemata on an unconscious level. Bourdieu called these group-specific dispositions and modes of action orientations which project beyond the individual's horizon of meaning forms of *habitus*. One of the presuppositions of this concept (which can be likened to the concept of culture employed in British discussions of Marxism) is that Bourdieu could now claim that even if they subjectively orient their actions in other ways, social subjects act from the economic viewpoint of utility which had been deposited in the modes of orientation, classificatory schemes and dispositions binding to their group. The subjectively conscious plan of action therefore does not have to coincide with the habitually intended aim of action, which is in principle determined by utility maximization.

## II

In his anthropological studies Bourdieu developed an "economic" theory of action primarily because he wanted to investigate the field of symbolic practices in tribal cultures more dispassionately than had Lévi-Strauss. He did not find the Kabyle village communities to be a domination-free terrain in which the symbolic apparatus of human beings could truly express itself in the classificatory acts of the natives. Rather, his basic experience was of an unrelenting competition for status which kinship groups fought out by using symbolic taxonomies. The relentless gaze which Bourdieu had acquired in the course of his anthropological studies led him to regard the world of symbolic forms which had always been the source of wonderment for anthropologists as transformed into a sphere of social struggle. This developing distrust of the apparent non-purposiveness of symbolic and cultural achievements became the driving force for his later sociological investigations. The bridge between these two areas of research was provided by the hypothesis that in tribal societies kinship groups compete for standing in the social hierarchy in the same way as occupational groups in developed class-structured societies. In the latter case the struggle over the distribution of symbolic or economic "capital," whose possession decides social standing, was mediated by a network of social institutions. Nonetheless, if these institutions could be interpreted as socially reinforced arrangements used by the current ruling classes to control access to symbolic knowledge or economic property, then the more complex class capitalist social formation could also in principle be analysed via the explanatory model developed in his ethnographic studies.

This bold extension of the idea of competitive symbolic struggle to the situation of a highly developed industrial society, however, still required some theoretical distinctions which could take into account the altered status of symbolical formations and the added role of institutional mechanisms. Bourdieu was aware that struggles over "symbolic capital" would no longer have the simple form of direct competition for the appropriation of a socially recognized classificatory system, but would assume the form of a struggle over the acquisition and holding of cultural knowledge which was above all transmitted by educational institutions. In a series of theoretical and empirical studies conducted with various research teams since the nineteen sixties Bourdieu (1964, 1965, 1970, 1973) thus tried to analyze from this perspective the social impact of pedagogical institutions and forms of distribution of cultural knowledge. With hindsight these earlier studies merely represent theoretical

steps towards his major study *Distinction* (1979), which undoubtedly can be regarded as the pinnacle of Bourdieu's sociological work.

### III

Bourdieu has combined his investigation of "distinctions" with a critique of traditional aesthetics. This critique not only serves as a justification for the comprehensive concept of culture which is central to his sociological analysis, it also attunes the reader to the anti-bourgeois tenor of his argument. The aesthetic judgments made by members of various classes, he provocatively asserts, are governed by the same social logic which lies at the basis of all other judgments of taste. In effect the attitude we take toward works of art is not the spontaneous result of some aesthetic impression, but the social product of an educational process, in which aesthetic judgments like all other dispositions of taste are class-specifically inculcated. Bourdieu critically develops this thesis with respect to Kantian aesthetics which has led him to subtitle his book "A Critique of the Social Judgment of Taste." He could, of course, just as well have used any other philosophical aesthetics for his heretical prefatory remarks. He is clearly not interested in an argumentative exchange with a particular aesthetic perspective, but rather with pursuing a sociological demolition of the aesthetic sphere as such. For if our appreciation of works of art is ruled by the same logic governing our attitudes towards cuisine or sport, then aesthetic judgments lose their distinctive claim to validity. We can cheerfully add them to that diffuse realm of taste impressions and habits which make up our everyday culture.

This critique of aesthetics, by which Bourdieu attempts to rob aesthetic judgments of all claims to rationality only has the status of a conceptual clarification in the study as a whole. The intention of his critique is to justify basing the study on a concept of culture so comprehensive as to indiscriminately cover eating habits, styles of dress and judgments of art. With this broad concept of everyday culture in mind we can now discover the real goal of his inquiry: to decipher the social logic governing the inculcation of the group-specific taste dispositions, lifestyles and habits which exist alongside each other within the social space. Not only his evaluation of others' research data, but above all the interpretation of his own surveys and observational protocols provides Bourdieu with the evidence for his guiding hypothesis: the conjecture gleaned from his anthropological results, namely that the various tastes, habits and lifestyles of social groups represent the current strategies, hardened into habit, of a competitive social struggle. We will see at the end of the pa-

per that this thesis is by no means as unproblematic as it now appears; indeed, ultimately the theoretical questions it poses are in the end at least as imposing as the empirical evidence it provides is trenchant.

#### IV

The utilitarian concept of social action then is at the basis of Bourdieu's social theory and analysis of culture. Since social groups incessantly strive to better or at least hold on to their social position, each particular analysis of a given social structure presents only a momentary cross-section of the current struggle. Bourdieu (1984, p. 2456) uses a useful image to explain this idea: "Like a photograph of a game of marbles or poker which freezes the balance sheet of assets (marbles or chips) at a given stage, the survey freezes a moment in a struggle in which the agents put back into play, at every moment, the capital they have acquired in earlier phases of the struggle, which may imply a power over the struggle itself and therefore over the capital held by others." In the arena of competitive social struggles there are, as we have already indicated, two sources of capital which social groups can use in their struggle to improve their own social standing. In some places in *Distinction* Bourdieu (1979, pp. 1334) refers to *social capital*: the quantity and quality of social relationships ("connections") as a third factor in class formation. However, he generally distinguishes only between *economic capital* (property and possessions) and *cultural capital* (cultural knowledge) as the central resources used in class-specific life situations. By economic capital he understands, unusually for a Marxist, all goods directly convertible into money, without distinguishing between productive capital and unproductive wealth. By *cultural capital* he understands all the learnable skills and competences which enable individuals to handle the social potentials of scientific information, aesthetic enjoyment and everyday pleasures. Of course, the difficulty of quantitatively measuring skills of this kind already points to the limitations of Bourdieu's metaphorical assimilation of the cultural sphere to the medium of money. Consequently for empirical research purposes he therefore makes do with the much less demanding concept of educational capital, designating the "officially accredited part of cultural capital," the number and value of one's acquired diplomas and professional titles (see Bourdieu, 1979, p. 21 on the relationship between educational and cultural capital).

Of course these resources for social class position can only assume their characteristic function if their supply is held under control. Con-

sequently Bourdieu sees the competitive social struggle as entailing a continuous series of strategies to acquire and then lock up these resources. Those social groups who have already managed to accumulate cultural knowledge or economic wealth will not only try to maintain their holdings against outsider groups just now beginning to struggle over them, they will also try to keep the quantity of available possessions scarce. Here Bourdieu is implicitly taking up the concept of social closure so fruitfully employed for class theory in recent Anglo-American sociology which is derived from Max Weber. Here "social closure" means the strategies used by social collectives to maintain or enhance their privilege and opportunities for acquisition through the monopolization of certain goods (see Parkin, 1974; Heinze, et. al. 1981).

For Bourdieu these processes, whether they be strategies of social closure or strategies to acquire social goods, are not merely a specific dimension of societies, they rather form the practical element of which societies in general consist. In this way, each particular aspect of social life can be seen as a constantly fluid power relation originating in the collective social struggles over distribution. One can therefore only speak of "social structure" if one bears in mind that here one is dealing with the artificial consequence of producing a synchronic cross-section of a process which in reality cannot be fixed.

This methodological reservation, which his assumption of a permanent struggle over distribution obliges him to make, is included in Bourdieu's self-understanding of his own analysis of French social structure. Of course, he has to evaluate in a non-traditional way not only the methodological status, but also the theoretical criteria of his class analysis. The distinction between economic and cultural capital as the two resources used to measure a subject's position in the social structure and thus his life situation forces Bourdieu to revise certain aspects of traditional class theory. It is true that he can rely on Marxism to provide the basis for a preliminary formulation of social divisions, since he regards the volume of one's overall disposable capital as the ultimate criterion of social class membership. He also accepts as self-evident the emergence of three classes whose members, to be sure, are distinguished as a class not by the common position they have in the production process, but by the equivalent amounts of cultural knowledge and economic wealth they possess. This attempt to construct sub-groups of the main social classes leads Bourdieu to make a further differentiation. The second criterion for measuring a subject's position in the social structure is the "composition structure" of his or her capital wealth: the specific relation which one's level of educational achievement and one's financial wealth (education capital and economic capi-

tal) have to each other at any given time. If this criterion is used in the analysis of social structure, then one obtains, according to Bourdieu, a "two-dimensional" representation of social space (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 129). The resultant sub-groups are equated to occupation groups, and hence no longer distinguished solely by the possession of near equivalent amounts of overall disposable educational and monetary property, but in addition by the possession of the same "capital composition structure." Hence sub-groups are distributed vertically as well as horizontally across the society. Within each of the three levels of the class structure the respective fractions are situated along an axis which runs from one pole, a strong preponderance of education qualifications (cultural capital), across a middle point of symmetric distributions of both resources to the other pole of a strong preponderance of financial wealth (economic capital).

This extension of class theory into a second dimension, enabling one to survey, in addition to the hierarchical construction of levels, the horizontal internal structuring of social classes and hence the basis of intra-class conflicts, is merely the first revision Bourdieu makes to traditional class theory. In order to analyse the group-specific cultures of taste he finds it necessary to highlight the social composition and the "social trajectories" of current occupational groups as well (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 122ff). From the first perspective he has pursued the way individual occupation groups are composed in terms of the respective social origins of their members. From the second perspective he asks how the collective past and future of an occupational group, as manifest in the statistical average, is a function of the observable developments in the division of labour. Bourdieu integrates both points of view into a third, historical dimension intended to enable us to determine, in addition to the vertical and horizontal divisions, the temporal dynamics of the social structure. Finally, in an impressively constructed diagram which takes these points into account, we are given all the available official statistics on the social structure of contemporary France assembled together in a three-dimensional picture of the "social space" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 140ff).

V

This revision of class theory however much insight it provides into the processes of social mobility and strategies of reproduction of occupational groups is for Bourdieu only a preliminary step towards his real subject of interest. His action-theory based analysis of social strati-

fication, whose importance for a theory of social inequality has recently been recognized in West Germany (Kreckel, 1982), provides the macro-sociological framework for the investigation of group-specific cultures of taste. This investigation has its empirical basis in a survey first carried out in 1963 and then again in 1967/68, in which about 1200 persons selected according to social and geographical representativeness responded to 25 groups of questions on their preferences in film and music, styles of dress and interior decor, cuisine, sports and vacation destinations. The two surveys were preceded and accompanied by depth interviews with individuals and "anthropological" observations undertaken to gather direct impressions of the living conditions and styles of dress of the persons studied. 4 The data Bourdieu thus obtains fully confirmed his rough conjecture that group-specific cultures of taste should gradually crystalize from a collection of individual expressions of taste. After evaluating the questionnaires he had a panorama of the living habits of French occupational groups ranging from the preferences of university teachers for opera, theatre and Chinese cuisine to the predilection of farm labourers for Fernandel, soccer and potatoes. Bourdieu has also tried to graphically represent the results of his study by superimposing on the "space of social positions" a second diagram assigning to the different occupation groups corresponding life-styles (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 140; 1984 pp. 128-29). The table of horizontally and vertically stratified occupational groups as the bearers of distinct tastes and life-styles points to Bourdieu's real explanatory aim, the theoretical puzzle he endeavours to resolve for sociology: how can we explain the fact that members of a given occupational group by and large make the same or similar judgments of taste if we are not to fall back on the traditional mode of deriving differences in the cultivation of taste from economically conditioned possibilities of consumption alone?

It is not difficult to guess that Bourdieu will attempt to answer this question, which is crucial to his overall enterprise, in the realm of competitive symbolic and cultural competitive struggles which stands at the center of his construction of society. He must also, of course, consider a feature of cultural knowledge initially bracketed when he conceptually likened culture to the medium of money. That which constitutes the social value of a particular form of cultural behaviour has no stable, interpretation-free equivalent as does money. That is why judgments of taste and life-style, which may be considered as embodiments of cultural knowledge, have a certain social validity only if the aura of social superiority can be lent to them in a socially binding way. Social groups, if they want to achieve social recognition for themselves, must at any given time so choose or stage their everyday life-style such that it takes



on the illusion of superior stylistic value; Bourdieu locates the strategy behind this in the act of cultural demarcation, or "distinction."

The concept of "distinction" is the theoretical key to understanding the everyday culture of the ruling classes. It applies to all attempts to lend the aura of superior cultural value to one's own style of life by distinguishing one's own taste from mass taste. 5 In order to analyze such processes of increasing symbolic domination, one must therefore have an approximate idea of the taste culture relative to which acts of cultural distinction are oppositionally performed. Bourdieu acquired an initial impression of the peculiarities of popular tastes by testing the aesthetic judgments of members of the lower social classes. In a first approximation to the basic stylistic feature in which the taste culture of the classes poorest in symbolic and cultural "capital" has been concentrated, he finds the tendency to a sober and pragmatic reduction of the work of art to its everyday practical function. He then progressively refines this perception by applying the concept of habitus, the centrality of which to Bourdieu's theory of culture we have already noted. The habitus of the lower social strata translates the hardship of a economically restricted and oppressive existential situation into the virtue of a style of life informed by a "realistic hedonism" and a "sceptical materialism," by the predilection for practical cultural goods and by the decision for financially procurable pleasures (see Bourdieu, 1979, ch. 7).

These passages in which Bourdieu uses empirical evidence and sketches to try to shed light on the working class "choice of the necessary" are not among the best in the study. His analysis engages only when detailed phenomenological descriptions draw us sufficiently close to the behavioural features in question, as in the description of typical bodily movements and corresponding eating manners. On the other hand Bourdieu tends to disappoint when he impatiently forces the assembled individual observations into the theoretical schema of the proletarian habitus. The concept of "habitus," as these passages in particular show, depends on a reductionist model of representation. Because Bourdieu applies it only to the collective perceptual schemata and orientational models ensuring that the economic constraints and chances of a collective life situation are translated into the apparent freedom of an individual way of life, he cannot develop any theoretical sensitivity to different everyday cultural meanings, nor for their expressive or identity confirming elements. Bourdieu has so strictly interpreted the group-specific pattern of behaviour from the functionalistic viewpoint of cultural adaptation to social class situations that he is evidently unable to recognize those tasks involved in securing a collective identity



that, from the perspective of more recent writings on cultural history, are carried out within everyday culture.

To be sure, Bourdieu only uses the analysis of proletarian "mass taste" as a foil for his study of the competitive symbolic struggles among the other social strata. For the popular "cult of necessity," characterized by an instrumental relationship to one's own body, by the generally sociable consumption of high-calorie food and lastly by a sober, functional attitude towards clothing and works of art, presents to all higher-established occupational groups just the negative contrast to their own efforts at distinction. The bourgeois cultural world, the everyday culture of the middle and upper classes, is distinguished (prior to any internal differentiation) by a common negation of the pragmatic, functionally oriented taste informing the life-styles of the lower classes. Bourdieu renders this resulting principle contrast between distinguished and popular taste cultures by a series of conceptual oppositions: where "vulgar" taste emphasises the life-practical *function* of cultural goods, "higher" taste focuses on their *form*; where "ordinary" taste adopts the viewpoint of mere *quantity*, distinguished taste prefers to judge according to *quality*; finally, while popular taste accords importance to the matter of objects of consumption, bourgeois culture gives weight to the *maniere*, the way and manner of consumption (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 197ff).

The dualism of a "taste in luxury" and a "taste in necessity," exhibited by a list of such oppositional pairs, substantiates Bourdieu's rough division of the everyday culture of modern societies into two worlds. As the dual meaning of the term distinction in the title of his book indicates, however, he is primarily concerned with the "fine differences" operating in the world of distinguished taste alone. The real aim of his inquiry is to uncover those mechanisms which operate for the cultivation of competing styles of life within the world of distinguished culture. We can easily infer how Bourdieu lays out the analysis from the argument presented above. The different social groups which are each able to demarcate themselves from the popular culture of taste of the lower strata by freeing themselves from the cares of everyday existence can only improve their own status by means of cultural practices by proving to one another the stylistic exclusiveness of these practices. This is why, in Bourdieu's view, the bourgeois cultural world exists as the incessant struggle for the highest measure of social distinction. To be sure, the occupational groups from both classes enter this cultural struggle with different weapons: they can only use for their own particular goals of distinction those stylistic practices generally at their disposal, given

their current holdings in economic and cultural capital, financial wealth and educational capital. Middle class social groups thus lead a hopeless struggle; while they may indeed rise above the lower classes' "taste for necessity," as their economic capital provides them room to develop an everyday culture freed from existential care; they are powerless when compared to the ruling classes' efforts at exclusiveness, since they again lack the requisite education, cultural knowledge and financial wealth. Bourdieu regards the habitus embodying the middle classes' way of life as a response to this predicament. Within their everyday culture hardened into habit, members of the middle class unwittingly act as if their deficiency in economic and cultural capital were compensated for by the additional energies of readiness to sacrifice and eagerness to learn. The everyday culture of the declining old petite bourgeoisie is permeated by an "ethos of conscientiousness," and that of the rising new petite bourgeoisie is informed by autodidactic diligence and perseverance (Bourdieu, 1979, ch. 6).

Only when Bourdieu has analyzed the worlds of lower and middle class taste, does he focus on the space of that cultural sphere where struggles for distinction seem to occur in their pure form. Only now does he take up the phenomenon of the competition over stylistic exclusiveness, which had after all been on his agenda from the very beginning: "the actual site of the symbolic struggles," he concedes, "is of course the ruling class itself" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 283). In this sphere, according to Bourdieu's highly original theory of classes, three occupational groups contending for the claim to the highest rank in the hierarchy of social recognition oppose one another: the group of tenured intelligentsia, well-paid intellectuals and artists; the group of independent professionals; and finally the group of owners and managers of large-scale industry. These social groups, united by their cultural demarcation from the other two classes, each endeavour to establish an individual style of life relative to the other groups so as to acquire the aura of greatest exclusiveness. At the same time, like all other occupational groups, they also depend upon the specific means placed at their disposal by their current capital holdings. Intellectuals and artists are thus compelled to assert the exclusiveness of their own life-style by pursuing as a group aesthetic enjoyments and everyday pleasures which demand a high degree of cultural knowledge, yet only a relatively small amount of financial wealth. Bourdieu calls this habitus, paradigmatically embodied in the predilection for exotic cuisine, in the propensity to noncommittal social critique and in the openness to aesthetic experimentation "ascetic aristocracism" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 321ff).

The same applies to the other two sub-groups of the ruling class: they too use the particular advantages of their current "capital wealth," when, as "independent professionals," they cultivate a style of life both luxury-oriented and culturally advanced, while as bourgeois steeped in tradition they develop a life-style especially geared to resplendent show and etiquette (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 321ff).

The unrelenting struggle between these three groups for the highest degree of stylistic exclusiveness is in Bourdieu's eyes the actual motor of cultural development. The ruling strata must not only, whenever the other occupational groups manage to adopt from below hitherto exclusive cultural practices, add novel, socially unique elements to their style of life in order to escape the constant threat of cultural vulgarization; they must also contest among themselves over the standards socially determining the value of a cultural life-style. Bourdieu, (1979, p. 284) calls these contests, alluding to a theory of domination not actually worked out in his book, "struggles for the basis of legitimate domination." The "marks of distinction," the principles of cultural validity, thus display the real object of the competitive struggle which subgroups of the ruling class carry out against one another by means of their strategies of symbolic representation: "struggles over the appropriation of economic or cultural goods are, simultaneously, symbolic struggles to appropriate distinctive signs in the form of classified, classifying goods or practices, or to conserve or subvert the principles of classifications of these distinctive properties" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 249). In some passages of his work, Bourdieu tries to present the dimensions and characteristics of such a struggle; but in just these passages his empirical material, it seems, resists Bourdieu's theoretical scaffolding. This points to a misunderstanding which lies at the heart of his study: for in order to study the social contests over "marks of distinction" and standards of cultural validity, Bourdieu would have had to distinguish more strictly between a struggle over distribution and a normative-practical struggle than is allowed by an approach which perceived the forms of life of social groups as a whole from the utilitarian perspective of an "economics of practical actions."

## VI

Bourdieu delivers a number of enlightening jolts to the reader by presenting the everyday culture of his own society as the arena for competitive symbolic struggles. Anyone who has worked through the 650 pages of *Distinction* will no longer view the cultural inclinations, the styl-

istic extravagances and literary tastes of his own group with the same naiveté as before. In this respect Bourdieu's study continues the process of scientific demystification which sociological enlightenment has always pursued. But even the most startling disclosures and most convincing interpretations Bourdieu performs on his empirical material cannot hide the fact that at the theoretical level he leaves us oddly in the dark concerning the role collective cultures of taste play in contemporary societies. Bourdieu's theory of everyday culture, the conceptual thread linking his empirical analyses, is puzzling, indeed ambiguous; even if we overlook this, however, there remains a further discrepancy apparently inherent in the theory as a whole.

Bourdieu obtains the macro-sociological framework for his cultural analysis from his theory of stratification, the ingenious result of fusing together Marxian and Weberian arguments. According to this theory a social group's position and hence its life-chances are measured by the economic and cultural goods it is able to acquire and hold onto in the social struggle over the distribution of money and titles. As we have seen, Bourdieu considers that "academic qualifications" can operate as a medium comparable to money. The role which collective life-styles play in the social struggle over those goods explains the concept of "habitus," which is so important for Bourdieu's theory as a whole. Accordingly the forms of life and taste orientations which different groups, at any given time, pass on through processes of cultural socialization have a purely instrumental function. They so adapt individuals group members to their specific class situation that these individuals unwittingly, as the result of their valuations and judgments of taste, carry out the appropriate strategic actions, aimed at the improvement of their social position. The group-specific life-styles are, as it were, only the cultural embodiments of a position-dependent calculus of utilities, which all social groups seem to follow as a matter of habit (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 189ff). The concept of "distinction," however, which Bourdieu has programmatically placed on the masthead of his book, points beyond this merely instrumental function of everyday cultures; it is based namely on the assumption that the social groups try to distinguish themselves from one another by learning to inculcate mutually demarcated life-styles. Both functional characteristics of collective life-styles, the significance of group-specific forms of taste as captured by the concept of habitus and this significance as figured in the concept of distinction, exist side by side without Bourdieu having sufficiently clarified their relationship to one another. 6 Bourdieu treats collective life-styles in the sense of the second functional characteristic, that of the distinction model, for example, in one passage where he sums up

the difference between "petit bourgeois" and "upper middle class" taste dispositions along structuralist lines:

Even when it is in no way inspired by the conscious concern to stand aloof from working-class laxity, every petite-bourgeois profession of rigour, every eulogy to the clean, sober and neat, contains a tacit reference to uncleanliness in words or things, in temperance or improvidence; and the bourgeois claims to ease or discretion, detachment or disinterestedness need not obey an intentional search for distinction in order to contain an implicit denunciation of the 'pretensions', always marked by excess or insufficiency, of the 'narrow-minded' or 'flashy', 'arrogant' or 'servile', 'ignorant' or 'pedantic' petite bourgeoisie. It is no accident that each group tends to recognize its specific value in that which makes its value in Saussure's sense, that is, in the latest difference which is also, very often, the latest conquest in the structural and genetic deviation which specifically defines it (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 247).

Even if Bourdieu here employs, as I have indicated, a structuralist conceptual scheme, so that he takes the "meaning" or "value" of a social group to be formally determined by its mere "difference" from neighbouring groups, his train of thought has more wide-reaching implications. For not only has the role played by group-specific life-styles in the social class set-up changed relative to that of the concept of habitus, the concept of life-style, of "everyday culture" itself has also gained a new content. It no longer signifies just the symbolic forms of expression of the strategies for action with which the different occupational groups attempt to assert their social superiority over other social groups, but the cultural forms of life in which the social groups first endeavour to maintain their collective identity. Social groups now seek to demarcate themselves from one another by using symbolic distinction, as far as their economic means will allow, in order to give expression to their own life situation and to socially assert the associated value complexes. Bourdieu must therefore assume an internal connection between everyday culture and norms of action, between symbolic forms of expression and particular value conceptions whereas, earlier, when he spoke of the symbolic striving for distinction merely as a strategic means, he had to assume that the cultural forms of life are themselves the symbolic forms of expression for collective considerations of utility. This second assumption alone indicated what cannot be understood within the framework of the generalized concept of utility: namely, why social

groups should compete among themselves, as Bourdieu claims, for "marks of distinction," why, that is, they try to enforce their own current standards of cultural self-presentation over those of all other groups. For only if we assume that the social groups see in their own life-style not just a means of improving their own class position, but especially the symbolic expression of their own value complexes, can we sensibly proceed from the assumption of a competition between collective life-styles. Otherwise every social group, after carefully weighing utilities, would always know how to adapt its own everyday culture to the styles which have most recently come to dominate in society. The peculiar tenacity with which the social groups hold onto their cultures of taste and forms of life in the face of historical changes and social transformations, cannot be understood via the explanatory model provided by Bourdieu's utilitarian concept of action.

In some passages in his book Bourdieu comes close to thinking along these lines; especially the last chapter, where he presents the struggle over the symbolic classification of the social world as a "forgotten dimension of class struggle," (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 546) which converges with the thesis that in the arena of collective life-styles competing moral and cultural models of a society can stand opposed to one another. Yet the conceptual framework of his own theory prevents him from drawing out the consequences and carrying through this fundamental idea. The central economic concepts upon which his cultural analysis is based, compel him to subsume all forms of social conflicts under the type of struggles which occur over social distribution although the struggle for the social recognition of moral models clearly obeys a different logic. For the recognition which an existing social order lends to the values and norms embodied in the life-styles of a particular group does not depend on the volume of knowledge or wealth, or on the quantity of measurable goods the group has managed to accumulate, rather it is determined according to the traditions and value conceptions which could be socially generalized and institutionalized in the society. The social recognition of a life-style and of the values it symbolically represents thus depend on the degree to which the currently held norms of action and value conceptions have found social acceptance. While the economic struggle over distribution is thus a dispute amongst combatants solely mindful of their own utilities, in the moral-practical struggle each of the opposing groups fights for the others' normative approval. Max Weber (1976, p. 531ff) may have had this distinction in mind in his famous chapter "Class, Status and Party," of *Economy and Society*, where he attempts to distinguish between the "economic order" and the "social order" of a society, between the distribu-

tion of economic positions and the "distribution of social honour." 7 Economically powerful groups do have a considerably greater chance of institutionally generalizing their own value conceptions in society and thereby increasing the social recognition of their own conduct of life, but they achieve this not by the accumulation of cultural goods, but only the enforcement of a particular life-style which has conditional social approval.

However one might characterize this particular type of moralcultural conflict, Bourdieu would be unable to render it justice within the theoretical framework employed in *Distinction*. In the passages where he has not merely followed his all too simple concept "habitus" and tried to understand the group-specific cultures of taste as symbolic forms of social group identity, he applies the logic of struggles over distribution to the competition for recognition of these forms. He may have been misled by his own aim of understanding "cultural capital" as more than just the "academic qualifications" which an occupational group can in principle accumulate and which are acquired through the educational system. Perhaps all along in his study he has harboured the idea that the part of "cultural capital" not embodied in "academic qualifications" can to some extent be obtained through developing a taste "richest in distinction." But then he would have simply theoretically bypassed the problem he himself termed as crucial, namely how within a society the esteem, the distinctive worth of a life-style is socially determined. Thus Bourdieu's study repeatedly gives rise to the erroneous idea that the social recognition of a life-style and of the values it embodies can be gained in the same way as an economic good. Only by decisively abandoning the utilitarian framework of his empirical analyses could he have avoided making this crucial misunderstanding.

PART III  
INQUIRIES IN CONTEMPORARY  
MORAL THEORY AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY



## Chapter 12

### Moral Consciousness and Class Domination: Some Problems in the Analysis of Hidden Morality\*

A central problem of the critical theory of society is the connection between normative theoretical intention and historically situated morality. If a theory is to do more than merely appeal to the ethical standards upon which its critique of society is based, then it must prove the existence of empirically effective forms of morality with which it can reasonably connect. This problem seemed to be solved, so long as the historical evidence of social class struggles seemed to demonstrate clearly the existence of a social movement led by moral principles. The collapse of this original trust in revolutionary Marxism is the key experience of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School; it now faces the task of linking ethically founded norms and historically effective morality in a situation in which a politically organized workers' movement has lost all empirical visibility in Germany.

Critical theory from Adorno to Marcuse interprets this historical fact as the result of the complete integration of the industrial working class in the institutional framework of capitalist society. The concepts of the "totally administrated world" or the "one-dimensional society" represent attempts to come to grips with this historical experience. Both Adorno and Marcuse are so strongly influenced by the impression of a

completely integrated capitalism that they seem no longer capable of imagining a morality which arises from socio-structural conflicts; neither of them traces the normative perspectives of his critique of society to an empirically effective morality. Adorno compensates the lost hope of revolution in a philosophical aesthetic which views the work of art as the historically definitive location of moral insights; Marcuse attempts to retrieve the lost hope of revolution naturalistically by means of a Freudian instinct theory which supposes the currently effective source of emancipatory action to lie in a socially impregnable reservoir of erotic drives. In both versions of critical theory, the normative claim has thus become separated from the task of analyzing the normative conflicts which are influential in contemporary society.

This well-known phase of the history of critical theory seems to have been overcome with Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism. Here the analysis of society is laid out in such a way that the empirical force of a moral consciousness anchored in the reproductive process of the species itself can be discovered in the deformations of late capitalism. This ambitious version of critical theory employs a theory of evolution in which the process of sociocultural development is divided into two dimensions of rationalization: a practical-moral and an instrumental-technical learning process. This establishes the framework for an analysis of society which discovers in the structural conflicts of a social system the signs of an historical movement in which the moral learning process of the species persistently achieves expression.

The basically Hegelian model of history, in which moral insights take on the historically most productive function, determines the framework of the analysis of late capitalism: in order to maintain the consistency of his fundamental evolutionary idea, Habermas is required to analyze the normative capability for social change by identifying moral-practical knowledge contents. His social theory suggests that today the normative learning process of the species has a new carrier group in those social avant-gardes which, in a climate of socio-economic well being, learn to petition for the normative surplus of bourgeois moral universalism and to work toward a communicative ethic. Thus it is no longer experiences of economic dependence and social deprivation, but rather the sensitivity to socially unrealized claims to justice, which in turn is linked with a well organized process of socialization, which have now become the presupposition for a moral-practical critique of society.

Habermas shares with Adorno and Marcuse the image of society which lies at the basis of this thinking. The preservation of the late-

capitalist social system has succeeded up to now because the moral and practical interests of the wage-earning class can be materially compensated to a great extent and diverted onto the track of private consumption; the normative potential of the working class seems to be dried up by state intervention. The practical interest in a higher form of social justice is to be located only in those socially privileged groups which seek a new social formation on the basis of an ethically principled rejection of capitalist instrumentalization. Habermas therefore consistently translates these hypotheses into a social-psychological crisis theory, in which the normative conflicts of late capitalism have been displaced from the tension between social classes to the experience zones of youthful protest-behavior. Thus it appears that this crisis theory, which is supposed to explain the social roots of present-day normative conflict, has lost all connection with a theory of class conflict.

In what follows I do not wish to criticize this crisis theory directly; it can cite empirical evidence all too easily at the moment. The issues which I would like to consider briefly here are located in the conceptual approaches to the macro-sociological analysis of potentialities for critical normative action. Since such a theoretical enterprise obviously depends upon the depth and clarity of the categories with which social theory illuminates the normative and practical conflicts of its time, I will concentrate upon this problem. How, I would like to ask, must the categories of social theory be constructed, so that they can detect empirically effective forms of morality at all? My supposition is that Habermas' theory of society, to which I will address myself here, is so constructed that it must systematically ignore all forms of existing social critique which are not recognized by the political-hegemonical public. I further suggest that, for this reason alone, Habermas is required to exclude the identification of important fields of contemporary moral conflict from his theory of capitalist class conflict. First, I will attempt to show that Habermas' notion of empirically effective ideas of morality does not pay sufficient attention to class-specific forms for the expression and formulation of morality. In the second step, I would like to show briefly that the way in which social feelings of injustice are manifested is also dependent upon the degree of effectiveness of social control, in order to indicate, thirdly, the consequence of these two considerations: that a field of moral-practical conflicts may lie hidden behind the façade of late-capitalist integration, in which old class conflicts continue to take place either in socially controlled or in highly individualized forms. These concluding remarks should be understood as

speculative suggestions which must still be translated into empirical research issues.

I

Habermas' theory, which is intended to establish the normative claims of a critical theory of society on the basis of a procedural ethic of discourse, poses the problem of the historical and social embeddedness of formal moral principles. 1 His conception leads to a solution in which the empirical bearers of socially innovative moral principles are identified from the viewpoint of the ethical level of their forms of moral consciousness and ideas of justice. I would like to concentrate upon this point of connection between formal discourse ethics and empirically derived sociology of morals. My supposition is that Habermas must implicitly ignore all those potentialities for moral action which may not have reached the level of elaborated value judgments, but which are nonetheless persistently embodied in culturally coded acts of collective protest or even in mere silent "moral disapproval" (Max Weber).2 If it is correct, however, this supposition would have consequences for the way in which Habermas deals with the moral and practical conflicts of the present day.

In order to bring out more clearly the distinction with which I wish to operate, I would like to turn to recent attempts to write a social history of the plebeian masses ("crowds") and the industrial proletariat.3 Here the crass discrepancy has been worked out between the normatively based ideas of justice formulated in the culture of bourgeois experts and the political avant-garde, on the one hand, and the situationally dependent, highly fragmentary social morality of the suppressed classes, on the other. The leading moral ideas which accompany and support the social protest of peasants and urban underclasses may thus be understood as the result of a mixture of these two differently generalized value systems, as George Rudé has attempted to show:

Of these, the first is what I call the 'inherent', traditional element, a sort of 'mother's milk' ideology, based on direct experience, oral tradition or folk-memory and not learned by listening to sermons or speeches or reading books. In this fusion the second element is the stock of ideas and beliefs that are 'derived' or borrowed from others, often taking the form of a more structured system of ideas, political or religious, such as the Rights of Man, Popular Sovereignty, *Laissez-faire* and the Sacred Right of Property, Nationalism,

Socialism, or the various versions of justification by Faith . . . there is no such thing as a tabula rasa, or an empty tablet in the place of a mind on which new ideas may be grafted where there were no ideas before. 4

It seems to me worthwhile to abstract this line of thought from its original context in historiography and to apply it to the sociological analysis of potentialities for normative action. The structure of unwritten and experience-bound moral perceptions from which the authentic social ethic of the lower strata is constructed works like a cognitive filter through which hegemonial or dominance-critical systems of norms are presented. While the normative systems which developed within the culturally qualified strata contain self-consistent and logically connected ideas of right and wrong which outline principles of a just social order from the fictive perspective of an observer outside experience, the social ethic of the lower strata represents an uncoordinated complex of reactive demands for justice. Thus, while elaborated ideas of justice undertake to provide active evaluations of social situations within a relatively coherent system of relations, the unwritten social morality consists of situationally bound condemnations of these social facts. Since these negative valuations are not generalized into a positive system of principles of justice, I would like to suggest, in agreement with Barrington Moore, the term "consciousness of injustice" as a name for their cognitive substrate. This conception is intended to bring out the idea that the social ethic of the suppressed masses contains no ideas of a total moral order or projections of a just society abstracted from particular situations, but is instead a highly sensitive sensor for injuries to intuitively recognized moral claims.

It possesses, therefore, only an "inner morality" which is preserved in a complex of standards for moral condemnation. This inner morality represents, so to speak, only the negative side of the institutionalized moral order; its innovative, historically productive potential is that it points to hegemonially excluded possibilities of justice with the force of life-historical outrage. However, these implicit criteria of moral disapproval are not abstracted into a system of norms for action removed from specific situations. Thus, when the social history of the working class concentrates upon normative ideas in the daily life of the industrial proletariat, it is more likely to encounter securely anchored feelings of injustice rather than clearly formulated, ethically grounded goals. The basic cause of this is not the cognitive inferiority of the lower strata, but class-specific differences in normative problem pressure: the moral problems with which social classes are confronted within their

horizons of action are located on different levels of generality. The conditions which I would like to put forward as the causes for the different construction of the moral consciousness of socially suppressed groups are therefore social-structural in character.

Personality theory also casts doubt upon the idea of argumentative consistency in daily moral consciousness which we have from philosophical ethics and, in a certain sense, from Kohlberg's developmental psychology. The acting subject is in principle emotionally too much tangled in the situation to be evaluated, and has structured his or her social environment too richly with components capable neither of moralization nor of strategic treatment for the supposition of the normality of consistent moral consciousness to be meaningful at all. 5 Nonetheless, I think it is useful to search for socio-structural conditions which leave the moral orientations of the members of social underclasses untouched by institutional, and also by informal, demands for consistency. Preliminary, intuitive considerations support the plausibility of such a supposition.

A coherent value system does not normally belong to the institutionally regulated parts of the occupational roles available to members of oppressed social classes. Their occupational activity challenges them seldom or not at all to develop even the most provisional overview of the social life- and interest-structures of society as a whole. Thus, nothing is built into the daily routine of these social strata which is anything like an institutional pressure to depersonalize one's own norms of action. Secondly, a contribution to the moral dimension of social order is not customarily expected to result from direct communication with the members of less or unqualified occupational groups; they are not considered capable of developing a linguistic or cultural code for the solution of such problems. Moreover, the general pressure to integrate one's own moral norms of action into a potentially testable, consistently constructed system is very low for members of the socially lower strata. Michael Mann thus suggests in an influential essay that "only those actually sharing in societal power need develop consistent societal values."<sup>6</sup> Two systematic arguments may be introduced which remove the character of mere plausibility from this supposition:

- (a) The members of the socially suppressed classes are subject to no social legitimation pressure. While the members of the societally dominant class are generally required to normatively justify to themselves and the other members of society the existing social order, from which they receive their privileges, the dominated classes are not subject to this requirement. Although their social situation also requires a system of cultural interpretation which renders experienced inequality

explicable and imposed burdens bearable, they nonetheless do not face the internal and external necessity of founding the social facts which require justification upon a deductively constructed system of values based upon a principle of justice. For the members of the socially lower strata, therefore, there is little pressure to lay bare the norms of action which are valid for their life-world and to integrate them at least fictively into a system of value premisses reaching beyond that world.

- (b) The cultural climate of the socially suppressed classes does not include any pressure to elaborate the normative convictions of its members. In addition to the completion of highly qualified training programs, the social strata which participate in the exercise of political and economic power also acquire a monopoly on the acquisition of a cultural tradition; <sup>7</sup> moreover, they possess, as Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated, the symbolic means of decoding the ethical tradition which stimulates and supports the embedding of their own norms of action in a system of values which does reach beyond specific situations. At the same time, the cultural milieu of the dominant class awards premiums of social recognition to the most complex and abstract presentation of normative convictions without examining the power of these ethical self-portraits to provide action orientation. The cultural milieu of the social underclasses certainly does not have a comparable potential to stimulate the elaboration of its own value convictions; rather, its members are excluded from the possibility of ethical examination or verbal stylization of their norms of action by the processes of cultural reproduction embodied in the school system.<sup>8</sup> This can be supported indirectly by empirical investigations which show that members of the working class treat the moral problems of their own environment in a normatively secure and ethically mature manner, but fall back helplessly upon standard normative clichés when they are asked to deal with questions about the possible value principles of social orders in general.<sup>9</sup>

These two considerations, through which I have attempted to sketch the class-specific conditions of the formulation of moral principles, make a generalized value system positively oriented to moral norms appear to be rather improbable for socially suppressed strata and classes. Their moral claims are preserved as consciousness of forms of injustice because the social class situation neither forces nor supports their reflective elaboration and logical generalization. However, a concept which undertakes to measure the normative potential of social groups on the basis of collective ideas of injustice or forms of moral consciousness fails to grasp the implicit morality of such a consciousness of injustice. Since neither its value premisses nor its ideas of justice are transparently clear, the inner morality of the consciousness of social in-

justice can be grasped only indirectly on the basis of standards posed by the moral disapproval of social events and processes. From this perspective, a number of social actions which seem at first glance to lack any normative-practical intent or direction might possibly be recognized as forms of expression of the consciousness of social injustice. The analysis of these is made more difficult, of course, by the simple fact that the ways in which they are manifested are codetermined by both the degree of their political organization and the level of their social control. I would like to concentrate upon this problem in the second section of the essay in order to establish a linkage to the present situation.

## II

I have attempted to show that in the case of socially suppressed strata, the ideas of justice according to which social groups morally evaluate and judge a social order are more likely to be found in typical perceptions of injustice than in positively formulated principles of value. The standards governing moral disapproval of social processes are more reliable indicators of expectations for a just and good social order than the often conventionalistic value system of the lower strata, which is seldom ordered in a logically satisfying manner. If his consideration is correct, then there is a potential for expectations of justice, need claims, and ideas of happiness preserved negatively in the consciousness of injustice in these social groups, which for social-structural reasons do not reach the threshold of proposals for a just society. This argument contains a double abstraction, however: on the one hand, I have abstracted from all processes in which either the suppressed groups themselves, or political avant-gardes, culturally mobilize and strategically organize collective feelings of injustice in order to bring them into political conflicts in the form of arguable justice claims; I have also abstracted, on the other hand, from state or institutional processes which limit and control the opportunities both to formulate perceptions of social injustice and to make them public in order to force them below the threshold of political articulation. This form of argument is intended to make clear that the ways in which feelings of social injustice are presented are not subject to the free choice of the subjects involved, but are influenced and codetermined by various mechanisms of class domination. The task common to these processes of the social control of moral consciousness is to hinder the manifestation of feelings of social injustice at such an early point that the consensus character of societal dominance is not threatened. These techniques of control thus represent



strategies for the maintenance of the cultural hegemony of the socially dominant class by latently narrowing the possibilities of articulating experiences of injustice.

In order to describe the mechanism of normative class dominance, I would like to attempt to make a distinction between processes of cultural exclusion and processes of institutional individualization. These processes of social control achieve their purpose by limiting either possibilities of symbolic and semantic expression or the spatial and sociocultural conditions of class-specific experiences of deprivation and injustice. The first process aims at desymbolization, the second at the individualization of class-specific consciousness of injustice.

(a) Processes of cultural exclusion are those strategies which limit the articulation chances of class-specific experiences of injustice by systematically withholding the appropriate linguistic and symbolic means for their expression. <sup>10</sup> These strategies are applied through agencies of public education, the media of the culture industry, or forums of political publicity. They weaken the ability to articulate which is the basis of the successful thematization of the consciousness of social injustice. I believe that, when used with caution, Foucault's discourse analysis could aid the discussion at this point. In order to investigate "procedures of exclusion," Foucault proceeds on the assumption that "one does not have the right to say everything, that one cannot speak of everything at every opportunity, that, finally, not just anyone can talk about just anything. Taboos of subject, rituals of circumstance, superior rights of the speaking subject—these are the three types of prohibition."<sup>11</sup> Accepting for the moment this three-fold division for procedures of linguistic exclusion, we may discover three social techniques for controlling the articulation of social injustice. The language system taught today by the agencies of socialization and spread by the mass media so strictly formalizes and depersonalizes group- and class-specific experiences of injustice that they remain completely external to the world of communication. At the same time, situations of legitimate disapproval are specified, perhaps even regulated by law, and the degrees of significance of moral speech are vertically stratified—moral disapproval acquires greater public weight with increasing education. Yet precisely those sectors of the horizon of individual experience which consist of class-specific deprivations and injuries are thereby largely excluded from public discussion; even at the individual level they can be expressed only with effort. Of course, this well-documented process of desymbolization<sup>12</sup> is also accompanied by the institutionalized repression of cultural traditions and of the political learning processes of social resistance movements. The degree to which the sym-

bolic testimony of the history of the workers' movement, for example, are excluded from the public arena in the Federal Republic of Germany is a concrete example of such processes; this results in the drying up of a world of memory-laden symbols and the destruction of continuity-founding traditions. Mechanisms of this sort may be understood as components of cultural exclusion. They damage the linguistic and symbolic capabilities of individuals and in this way block the articulation of social injustice.

- (b) Processes of institutionalized individualization are all those strategies encouraged by the state or ordered by other organizations which attempt to counteract the danger of communicative agreement about group- and class-specific experiences of injustice by either directly requiring or providing long-term support for individualistic action orientations. They destroy the communicative infrastructure which is the basis of a cooperative mobilization and elaboration of feelings of injustice. The apparatus for these strategies of individualization is exceedingly complex. It extends from social and political rewards for individualistic risk-taking, to the administratively ordered destruction of neighborhood living environments, to the establishment of competitive labor markets within the factory or office. The ideology of achievement supported by the socializing institutions of the state, which promises to make life chances dependent upon individual occupational success, reinforces this individualization. The sociocultural effects of capitalist social policy are well documented. Although the state system of social insurance has been able to considerably reduce the financial risks of wage earners, its legal organization in the form of private insurance has hindered the development of alternative, collective organizational forms and has even individualized the perception of risk. 13 To cite a second example, the urban renewal of the postwar period has indeed improved the living situation of the working population, but at the same time through the social intermixing in the new urban housing developments and the architectural privatization of dwellings it has reduced the space(s) available for organizing class specific public forums. 14 According to my thesis, processes of this kind may be understood as components of a policy of individualization, the aim of which is to control the consciousness of social injustice. By individualizing the experiences of social living, these politics make the communicative identification of social injustice difficult.

The differentiation of institutional processes for the expropriation of speech (*Entsprachlichung*) and individualization is meant here only to serve as a provisional scaffolding of categories; it is doubtless incomplete, because it excludes, for example, state strategies of compensatory

satisfaction of demands or the symbolic elimination of injustice. However, it was my primary purpose to clarify a part of the institutional substructure for the legitimation of capitalist domination. I wanted to show in the first step that the normative claims of socially lower strata are more likely to be preserved in typical feelings of injustice than to be articulated in positively presented ideas of justice. In the second step I wanted to show that the public consciousness of injustice articulated by social groups permits no direct conclusions about the extent of socially felt injustice. We must, rather, take account of processes of state control which may not dissolve the consciousness of social injustice, but which nonetheless codetermine the way it is experienced and made public. I hope that I am now adequately equipped conceptually for the third step in my argument.

### III

In the course of my presentation up to now I have attempted to indicate the difficulties which are encountered by a macrosociological identification of potentialities for moral action. When we look in particular at the class-specific conditions for the formulation of social norms, we see that empirically effective claims to morality often acquire only the form of a relatively firm consciousness of injustice, which is close to concrete experience and rests upon unarticulated and uncoordinated ideas of justice. This consciousness of injustice allows the hegemonial system of norms to stand for pragmatic reasons, without accepting its claim to normative validity, because it does not possess a comparably abstract alternative system. In addition to this difficulty, there is the complicating factor that a socially effective consciousness of injustice can be subjected to a historically varying ensemble of control mechanisms which limit the chances for its articulation. It is, therefore, exceedingly problematic to bring in only socially manifest claims for justice as indicators of the empirically effective value conflicts in a society.

If these considerations reach the core of the difficulties which we encounter in the analysis of the normative potentialities of social groups, then I would like to propose the thesis that a social analysis derived from Marxism must see as its task today the identification of moral conflicts connected to the social class structure which are hidden behind late capitalism's facade of integration. I can only elaborate upon this assertion in a few brief notes, admitting in advance that it has a somewhat anachronistic sound at a time of inflationary farewells from the proletariat. I would like to question the influential thesis of the de-

activated class struggle on the basis of the provisional categorical scaffolding developed above, in order to sketch hypothetically two zones of normative social conflict which have largely been pushed aside into the realm of prepolitical privacy, but which nonetheless continue to coincide with the lines of friction between the social classes. As I have indicated, this is all very tentative now still.

The thesis of the institutionalized or deactivated class struggle is the centerpiece of all critical diagnoses of the current situation which remove the identification of normative social conflicts from the area of class theory. Its basic idea, which goes back, among other sources, to some of the postwar work of the Frankfurt School, 15 is that late capitalistic state interventionism dries up the political and practical interests of wage workers by means of a policy of material compensation and the institutional integration of the wage policy of the labor unions. The stabilization of late capitalism is said to have succeeded up to now because the economically dependent strata could be kept in a sort of apathetic followership by means of quantifiable compensations (income and free time) which can be obtained by routes which are relatively free of conflict. Because the social demands of the suppressed class have been deprived of their moral character (*Entmoralisierung*), the center of the normative conflict in social change thus shifts from class conflict to other centers which grow out of the increasing sensitivity of socially privileged groups to immaterial deprivation.<sup>16</sup> The central argument here, which, however, remains hidden, is the allegation that the experiences of deprivation which are bound up with the social class situation lead to demands that could be fulfilled by means conforming to capitalism, that is the individual distribution of money and time. For only by means of such a policy of social compensation can the normative conflicts which lay at the basis of the social class struggle be made into issues that can be subjected to technocratic management by the late capitalist state. Of course, one point in this chain of arguments which remains unexamined is where and to what extent the normatively directed demands of working people growing out of class-specific experiences of deprivation have been deflected. I suspect that in the theory of the inactivated class struggle, a problematic explanation of the degree to which late capitalist societies are normatively integrated has been combined with a reductionistic interpretation of capitalistic class structure in order to be able to avoid this question.

In such conceptions, first of all, it is concluded from the factual recognition which the current legitimating ideology enjoys, simply because the members of society carry out the reproductive tasks assigned to them, that a normative, though fragile, acceptance of the justifying

ideology of the welfare state, supplemented by technocratic arguments, has taken place. The justice claims of the suppressed class, it is alleged, can be satisfied to the extent that the proclaimed reduction of late capitalist politics to strategies of crisis prevention has met with normative agreement. However, this interpretation of the consensual character of late capitalist domination excludes an interpretation which would be more plausible on the basis of my categorical considerations: that, on the one hand, prevailing postulates of legitimacy are accepted only pragmatically, 17 without their even being capable of examination on the basis of their ethical quality; and that, on the other hand, this pragmatically accepted system of norms remains subject to a continuing skepticism fed by effectively controlled feelings of injustice. It is, of course, incumbent upon such an interpretation to prove the existence of class-specific forms of injustice consciousness which subject these merely endured norms of legitimation to unobtrusive, but nonetheless consistent, doubt. Of course I cannot fulfill this requirement empirically, but only by pointing to indicators of class-connected value conflicts. Before I attempt to do this, however, I must first attempt to identify the other problematic components of the thesis of inactivated class strugglethe reductionistic interpretation of capitalist class structure.

For in these conceptions, secondly, the private capitalist ownership and control of the means of production remains the key element of a class theory which must explain the unequal distribution of life chances in late capitalism; but, in the meantime, the concept of "life chances" itself has lost all of its sociocultural dimensions. At the level of social theory, the life chances which are unequally distributed among the social classes have been reduced to the single dimension of the elementary needs of life as measured in quantifiable goods. Only because the class structure of capitalist society is interpreted primarily as a system for the structurally unequal distribution of goods does the thesis appear plausible that a preventative policy of providing the suppressed classes with quantifiable compensations can satisfy their normative demands. Compensations conforming to this system can indeed deal with the basic deprivation of the social class situation, at least in a relative sense, and thus make class boundaries seem less clear. But this reduced basis for class theory is neither theoretically compelling nor empirically convincing.<sup>18</sup> If we pursue instead the stimulating suggestions given, for example, by Anthony Giddens' concept of exploitation,<sup>19</sup> or by Jóhann Arnason's anthropological class theory,<sup>20</sup> then a theory of classes designed to describe capitalism cannot be limited to the unequal distribution of material goods, but must be extended to the asymmetrical distribution of cultural and psychological life chances. I mean here a

maldistribution of opportunities for cultural education, social honor, and identity-guaranteeing work, which is surely difficult to measure, but nonetheless empirically verifiable. When we include in the perspective of critical social theory this dimension of the structurally unequal distribution of immaterial goods, by which the class of wage workers which only has disposal over its manual labor power, is cumulatively victimized, zones of normative conflict become visible which have unobtrusively penetrated daily life, and which are based on class-specific feelings of injustice.

As I see it, the perception of normative-practical social conflicts thus depends also upon the depth and clarity of the class theory on which it rests. In order to at least indicate the basic lines of a class conflict which has been forced below the threshold of public political articulation, I will limit myself to two hypothetical points. These proceed from the conviction that the elementary components of societal "proletarianness," the physical and alienated nature of the work, have not lost their experiential significance, despite the historically unprecedented increase in the standard of living of the working class. 21 Unarticulated indications of moral condemnation of the existing social order are hidden, I suppose, in largely individualized struggles for social recognition and in daily struggles at the work place. These may have the potential of becoming justice claims capable of universalization, since they indirectly illuminate socially established asymmetries. In fact, however, so long as they have not yet become demands capable of rational support, they form the basis of broadly varying convictions, from anticapitalist conservatism to attitudes critical of capitalism.

- (a) The existence of a class society based upon the unequal market chances of individual productive agents, but ideologically connected to individual educational success, results in a lasting inequality in the distribution of chances for social recognition. Informally and institutionally, the different occupational positions are subjected to a hegemonial system of valuation which distributes opportunities for respect and ascriptions of intelligence. As Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb show in their impressive study, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*,<sup>22</sup> this unequal distribution of social dignity drastically restricts the possibility of individual self-respect for lower, primarily manually employed occupational groups. So long as the identity-supporting recognition structure of a collective social movement is lacking, the practical reactions to these daily experiences of injustice are limited to individual or group-specific constructions of a "counterculture of compensatory respect" attempts, restricted to the privacy of pre-political action or even to a solipsistic world of thought, either to symbolically raise the status of one's own work activity or to symbolically lower the status of the socially

higher-placed form of work. These uncoordinated attempts to gain, or regain, social honor, which have largely been deprived of coherent linguistic expression, are what Pierre Bourdieu describes with his concept of "cultural distinction." They are based on a highly sensitive consciousness of injustice, which implicitly lays claim to a social redefinition of human dignity.

- (b) Capitalist class society determines not only the type and purpose of individual occupational labor, but also codetermines to a great extent the degree of freedom and control of individual work activities. The members of the socially suppressed class, who hold the lowest ranks in the factory or office hierarchy of dominance, are forced into monotonous work activities which offer little or no opportunity for individual initiative. As a result of the widespread adoption of Taylor's principles of labor efficiency capitalist production policy has detached the labor process from the technical knowledge of the workers, isolated technical planning from the manual execution of work, and subjected the entire labor process to detailed control on the basis of an organized monopoly of knowledge. The workers reply to the experience of the systematic expropriation of their work activity 23 with a system of daily violations of norms and rules in which they attempt to retain at least informal control of the entire production process. The production policy of capitalist industrial enterprises is thus accompanied by a counteracting process in which the workers attempt to apply their situationally superior knowledge as an informal means of practical self-defense.<sup>24</sup> I interpret these labor struggles, which lie below the threshold of publically recognized normative conflict, as indicators of a consciousness of injustice which implicitly lays claim to the right to the autonomous organization of work.

These brief concluding thoughts, which have ignored group and gender-specific aspects in a hardly admissible manner, are only intended to be illustrative. They are intended only to indicate the direction in which such categorical considerations must proceed in order to help prepare the way for empirical investigations of the unpublished side of class struggle, the political aspect of which has been largely institutionalized. I believe that an analysis of society which accurately describes the reality of capitalist class relations must construct its fundamental concepts in such a way that it can grasp the normative potential of socially suppressed groups. The concept of the consciousness of injustice is intended to serve this purpose. With it, the critical theory of society can be kept open to socially repressed moral conflicts in which suppressed classes make us aware of the structural restrictions upon their claims to just treatment—that is, to as yet unrealized potentialities of historical progress.



Chapter 13  
Pluralization and Recognition:  
On the Self-Misunderstanding of Postmodern Social Theories

Even the decision to take the category of the "postmodern" seriously within social philosophy today requires a certain justification: the object domain of all theories with this title is unclear, their conceptual framework for an analysis of processes of social change is surely too narrow, and, besides, their individual bearing too self-satisfied, indeed unsympathetic. Every fresh concern with the fashionable concept makes all the more dramatically clear those inadequacies which were inherent in it right from the beginning: whether "postmodernity" should characterize only a changed constellation in the cultural realm or a new type of social integration, whether empirical rather than normative explanatory claims are connected with the concept, and to what extent reality, however changed, should enforce a total renewal of our understanding of theoryall these are questions that have so far remained entirely unclarified. Having first emerged in the well-defined field of architectural history, though robbed of all conceptual clarity on its further journey, the category nonetheless retains its widely effective and interdisciplinary suggestiveness: at least vaguely, it seems to be able to indicate socio-cultural processes of change and to help articulate a diffuse state of consciousness. In this situation, the following form of



debate with theories of the "postmodern" may be meaningful and helpful: to take seriously as far as possible their content with regard to a diagnosis of the present era in order then to confront it critically with the normative reference system within which they describe and evaluate new processes of development. Whoever proceeds in this manner, namely on the basis of a critique of ideology, separates the descriptive core of a theory from its interpretive framework in order to be able to present the reality grasped by this theory in a different, materially more appropriate light. In what follows, I shall attempt this, first by briefly outlining the diagnosis of the present era contained in the "postmodern" conception (I), then by inquiring into its theoretical framework of interpretation, which I suspect to be a Nietzschean tinged concept of aesthetic freedom (II), in order to at least sketch, in a final step, an alternative communication-theoretic interpretation (III). The guiding viewpoint of these theses is that the developmental tendencies correctly observed by postmodern theories can only be appropriately interpreted if, instead of regarding them from the poststructuralist viewpoint of an increase in aesthetic plurality and freedom, they are regarded from the perspective of a crisis in the social relations of recognition.

## I

In the social theoretic concepts of postmodernity, experiential processes are dealt with, which, though they have their roots in the economic and social changes of post-war capitalism, first became evident in the cultural upheavals of the 80s; these experiences reflect developmental tendencies which amount to a disintegration of the social lifeworld and indicate a new, dangerous threshold in the individualization of society's members. The formula proffered by postmodern social theories for the tendencies outlined is that of the "end" or "dissolution" of the social; I see primarily three relevant complexes of experience which are thereby captured in outline. Briefly:

- a) The technological innovations of the last half-century have and not least because of pressure from the internationalization of capital led to the emergence of a media and advertising industry which now envelops almost the entire world with a network of electronically produced information channels; this system of media-steered communication, whose most pointed forms of expressions today are the computer and television, increasingly appropriates the cultural achievements of the aesthetic avant-garde and profitably incorporates them into the mechanisms of reproduction. However, by culture thus becoming, to a growing

extent, both the bearer and the ideology of capitalist growth processes, it definitively loses its social buttress in the everyday lifeworld: cultural activities, whether rock concerts, football or works of art, are extracted from the direct communicative context of participating laypersons and concomitantly presented to solitary subjects as objects of merely passive observation. Therefore, a *tendency to dissolve the mediating aesthetic medium of the social lifeworld* can accompany this increasing incorporation of culture into the process of economic utilization: cultural activities would lose their character as a communication-generating *praxis* within the societal world of interaction and would assume the character of a merely secondary, electronically reproduced outer world in short, culture becomes a technological environment for humans robbed of their aesthetic potential (cf. as an overview, Jameson, 1986).

- b) Today, the danger of a dissolution of the mediating aesthetic-cultural medium of the lifeworld is accompanied by a process eroding its normative binding force. What Lyotard describes as the "end of meta-narratives" is, when dispassionately viewed, nothing other than the accelerated process of a destruction of those narratively constituted traditions, in which the members of a community could still reach a communicative understanding in the present about a common past and a correspondingly projected future (Lyotard, 1986; Honneth, 1984). Cultural traditions of this kind, that is, narratively constituted, context-spanning representations of societal development, seem, on the one hand, to lose their philosophical-historical basis of legitimation with the definitive shattering of metaphysical background certainties; on the other hand, however, there is still no post-metaphysical equivalent for the identity-securing and communication-generating functions of the disintegrating meta-narratives. For this reason, there is a danger that, together with the erosion of cultural-normative traditions as were provided, for instance, by the philosophical-historical constructions of the socialist or religious tradition the cultural-normative interaction medium of the lifeworld will dry out; because the one, narratively generated "history" disintegrates into many particular "histories," subjects can no longer reach an understanding beyond the borders of their respective reference group.
- c) Finally, the dissolution of the aesthetic and normative substance of the social lifeworld is also accompanied by a weakening of the subjects' ability to communicate. On the one hand, the loss of forces of cultural cohesion, by virtue of which social groups had expressively and normatively reproduced themselves, tends to cause subjects to become atomized individuals for each other; furthermore, however, with the dwindling biographical significance of industrial labor, that traditional

form of individual self-realization is also lost in which individuals learned, in the course of their occupational involvement, to perceive and value themselves as productive, cooperative partners in a socially useful field of activity. Taken together, both tendencies lead to a state of increasing disorientation, indeed fragmentation of the individual subject; because it is severed from the communicative bonds of life styles supported by tradition, Jean Baudrillard sees the solitary, internally flattened subject so strongly exposed to the influence of the electronically fabricated media reality today that it is gradually beginning to lose the cognitive ability to distinguish between reality and fiction: within the social lifeworld, there is a *process of the fictionalization* of reality taking place which allows the atomized individual to become an imitator of styles of existence prefabricated by media and which, corresponding to this on a wider scale, leads to an artificial pluralization of aesthetically shaped lifeworlds. Because the individual has lost the communicative buttress of a commonly shared cultural and narrative *praxis*, he is overcome by the superior force of that secondary stream of images which incessantly urges him to simulate unfamiliar styles of life; to this extent, the place of internally motivated ways of self-realization is being increasingly taken by the pattern of a media-generated, aesthetically organized biography (*cf.* as a general presentation, Baudrillard, 1983; for a critique, Kellner, 1989, Ch. 3).

As these three complexes of experience show, it is primarily changes within the communicative infrastructure of the social lifeworld to which postmodern social theories with a sensitivity for the times react; neglecting, to a large extent, political and economic factors, they register within everyday *praxis* a dissolution of those media of direct interaction of culture and narrative tradition, by means of which subjects had until now been able to relate to one another communicatively; the effect of the accelerated disintegration of forces of social cohesion is a tendency to empty subjectivity motivationally so that the electronic media world can then in compensation intervene in this emptied subjectivity with its offers of simulation. Summarized in this manner, the concept of the "postmodern" represents hardly anything more than a current perpetuation of the pessimistic diagnosis expounded by Adorno and Horkheimer in the chapter on the "culture industry" in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; the peculiar character of the new concept, however, reveals itself only when one examines more precisely the theoretical frame of reference within which the stated processes of development are interpreted and evaluated: in contrast to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, postmodern social theories give the diagnosed combination of cultural erosion and individual loss of authenticity a positive,

indeed often, an affirmative interpretation. 1 The conceptual means that make possible such a calculated *dedramatization* of the observed processes of dissolution are the result of the application of an aesthetic concept of individual freedom; as I would like to explain briefly in the second part of this paper, this concept makes it possible to see, in the disintegration of forces of cohesion that establish interaction, the chance for a playful unfolding of individual peculiarities, of "difference."

## II

Like all social theories oriented toward a diagnosis of the present era, be they Durkheim's or Weber's, Adorno's or Gehlen's, the concept of the "postmodern" is also based ultimately on a philosophical motif. As we know, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is theoretically dependent on a concept of the subject which stands partially in the tradition of life-philosophy and in romanticism, and partially in psychoanalysis a concept of the subject from whose perspective the emergence of the modern culture industry is disclosed as a further step in the self-reification of man; as if in a counter-move to this, in postmodern social theories a completely different concept of the subject is brought to bear, one which will make it permissible to see, in the destruction of man's social bonds, the chance for an expansion of his freedom. The change in perspective which comes about in the transition from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the theory of the "postmodern" is roughly comparable to the one Georg Simmel observed in the development from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche: whereas the former remains oriented toward the idea of an objective purposiveness of human life, but in view of its definitive impossibility he is propelled into the pessimism of his metaphysics of the will, the latter can free himself of such negativism by uncoupling the human life process from every connection to a putative general purpose, and by constituting the meaning of human life as a mere intensification of its possibilities; the idea of "self-realization," which of course always presupposes theoretical reference to some life goal, is here replaced by the notion of experimental self-creation on the part of human beings:

"For Nietzsche it is a matter of transferring the meaning-giving purpose of life which had become illusionary in its position outside of life into life via a backward turn, as it were. This could not come about in a more radical way than by means of an image of life in which the potential increase indicated in life itself the mere realization of what life, purely as such, contains in terms of possibilities for intensification

includes all life's purposes and values. Now, each stage of human existence no longer finds its purpose in an absolute or a definitive, but in the next highest stage, where everything which was previously only potential is aroused to greater scope and influence, that is, where life has become denser and richer, where there is more life. The Nietzschean superhuman is nothing other than the developmental stage which is above the one reached in each case by a current humanity, not a fixed ultimate goal that would give development its meaning, but expression for the fact that it does not need such a goal, that life possesses its own value in itself, that is, in that each stage is surpassed by a denser and more developed one" (Simmel, 1920, p. 6).

Such an aesthetic model of human freedom is what underlies, in one way or another, all versions of a theory of the "postmodern"; apart from not insignificant differences in specifics, they share the fundamental orientation toward an idea of individual self-creation influenced by Nietzsche: here, human subjects are presented as beings whose possibilities for freedom are best realized when, independent of all normative expectations and bonds, they are able to creatively produce new self-images all the time. The standard for freedom, which the individual can reach in experimental self-creation, is therefore measured according to the distance he can establish between himself and the cultural value sphere of his time (*cf.* Rorty, 1989, pp. 96 ff; Menke, 1990).

However, because this formulation creates the impression that, with the postmodern concept of freedom, it is a matter of an aesthetic interpretation of negative freedom, it is important to keep apart the two moments brought together in accordance with the idea: "negative freedom" in the sense of an inner independence from all tradition and community means for the individual subject at the same time gaining a new, as it were, a "positive" freedom of experimentally testing all possible forms of life. It is only this attitude of free experiment with oneself an attitude acquired through distance that gives negative freedom the positive sense intended by the idea of self-creation since Nietzsche.

Even this brief description shows in all clarity how the connection between the central philosophical motif and the diagnosis of the present era is established in postmodern social theory: if the individual's freedom increases only to the extent that he can leave the normative and cultural expectations of his time behind him while engaging in the innovative creation of possibilities for life, then the social lifeworld must be regarded primarily as a shackle for the individualizing power of aesthetic self-invention. The affirmative picture of the present-day situation a picture where the various concepts of the postmodern meet is therefore the result of the presupposition of an idea of aesthetic free-

dom: though the socio-cultural tendencies of our time must certainly be described as an indication of a disintegration of the social lifeworld, there can at the same time be seen in this state of affairs the increased chance for a liberation of the subject for the possibility of socially unconstrained self-creation. The "loss of the social" carries with it, not only the destruction of the communicative infrastructure of the lifeworld but also the possibility of creating new free space for the playful unfolding of individual differences. The term "difference" thus means here that the biographical peculiarities of every individual subject, its specific manner of self-creation, can better unfold the fewer the normatively encompassing bonds and contexts it is involved in.

This affirmative interpretation of our socio-cultural situation must of course fall into doubt when the validity of that aesthetic model is questioned; for as soon as it is contested that subjects can solipsistically achieve self-realization independent of normative bonds, that central idea is invalidated which makes it permissible to see in the dissolution of the social a chance for the unfolding of individual peculiarities. Since Hegel, the concept of recognition has taken the responsibility for the critique of such solipsistic models of self-realization: with this concept it is implied that human subjects are constitutively dependent on the normative approval of others in forming their identity, because they can ascertain their practical claims and goals only on the basis of the positive reaction of a counterpart.

Of course, this intersubjective-theoretic concept can only compete with Nietzsche's doctrine of freedom in that it posits the experience of recognition not only as a constitutive presupposition of identity formation, but at the same time as a condition for the practical realization of freedom. Subjects are really only capable of realizing the possibilities of freedom when they can, without constraint, positively identify, from the perspective of assenting others, with their own objectives; the realization of freedom presupposes the experience of recognition because I can be in true and complete accord with my goals of action only to the extent that I can be sure of the normative agreement of a communicative community which, if not a concrete one, is at least an idealized one. In this intersubjective theoretic sense, Hegel constantly distinguished at all stages of his theory formation between the same three degrees in the realization of freedom; it is important to keep them apart here because it is only in this way that the contrast to Nietzsche can be appropriately located. For Hegel, the freedom of expressing needs is measured according to the experience of recognition in love, just as it is realized, first, in the relationship between parents and children, later in the sex-

ual relationship between man and women, or in friendship (natural freedom); the freedom of individual self-determination arises for Hegel from the experience of legal recognition, just as it is established in modern law by the institutional anchoring of equal rights of freedom (social freedom); and, finally, the freedom of personal self-realization arises for him from the experience of an ethical [*sittlich*] recognition, just as it is guaranteed by social communities in that they allow the individual's aims in life to be interpreted in the light of commonly shared values as a contribution to or an enrichment of the collective good (freedom of self-realization). It is this last dimension of personal self-realization that allows us to comprehend Hegel's conception as a systematic critique of Nietzsche's aesthetic doctrine of freedom.

Thus, on this interpretation, the freedom of self-realization is not measured according to the distance the individual can establish between himself and the cultural lifeworld, but according to the degree of recognition he can find in his social environment for his freely chosen goals: instead of being defined by the scale of distance from all normative bonds, the increase in personal individuality is determined here by the degree to which individual differences are communicatively granted, indeed encouraged (*cf.* Honneth, 1990). Here I cannot discuss, even briefly, such an intersubjective concept of ethical life where, in the tradition of Hegel and Mead, self-realization is coupled to the social precondition of successful forms of reciprocal recognition; however, in conclusion, I shall at least roughly sketch the consequences arising for the interpretation of the above-mentioned developmental tendencies when the Nietzschean concept of freedom is replaced by the one coming from the tradition of the theory of recognition: it should become apparent that what is perceived from the perspective of postmodern conceptions as an indication of aesthetic pluralization must first of all be interpreted as a sign of a serious crisis in the structure of recognition in highly developed societies.

### III

If the diagnosis of the present era presented by sociological theories is decisively co-determined by premises at the level of the basic philosophical motifs, then it must be possible to draw negative conclusions for the "postmodern" interpretive approach from the suggested critique of Nietzsche's conception of freedom; the affirmative picture it produces for the present simply cannot hold good as soon as it is theo-



retically contested that the increase in personal freedom can be determined as a process of the individual production of new self-images. The critical counter-thesis, according to which the realization of freedom is dependent on corresponding forms of social recognition, allows, characteristically enough, the starting point of postmodern social theories to appear in a different light: that socio-cultural world, from which current developmental processes seem to distance us at present, must not be regarded merely as a hindrance to individual freedom; rather, it must also be viewed as a specific form of organizing individual freedom. The time of the "great narratives," which Lyotard speaks about when he wants to characterize the cultural disposition of social modernity, can, according to everything we know today, best be determined as a condition of ethical life in industrial society [*Sittlichkeit*]: here, the values coupled to professional life had become such a general although subculturally often undefined medium of recognition that at least the male members of society could attain social esteem for the way of life associated with labor.

The decrease in the significance of industrial labor, to which Baudrillard's postmodern diagnosis of the times directly refers, brings about the decline of the ethical relations of industrial life in developed societies today. Primarily two processes have begun to deflate the social value of industrial labor to such an extent that its entire milieu of values is in danger of dissolving along with it:

- a) The continuous growth of the service sector a growth equally prevalent in the international comparison of capitalist societies dislodged the classical forms of industrial labor as the standard role model for occupational activity long ago; when one speaks of gainful employment today, the paradigmatic image is no longer provided by the industrial sector's forms of labor, which are subject to technical performance assessment; rather, it is provided by the "reflexive" activities in the service sector: "In both private and public enterprises, activities such as teaching, curing, planning, organizing, negotiating, controlling, administering, and counselling that is, the activities of preventing, absorbing and processing risks and deviations from normality are overwhelmingly wage-dependent, just as is the case with the industrial production of commodities. These service activities are, however, different in two respects. First, because of the heterogeneity of the 'cases' that are processed in service work, and due to the high levels of uncertainty concerning where and when they occur, a technical production that relates inputs to outputs can often not be fixed and utilized as a control criterion of adequate work performance. Second, service work differs from productive work in the lack of a clear and uncontroversial



'criterion of economic efficiency', from which could be strategically derived the type and amount, the place and timing of 'worthwhile' work" (Offe, 1985, p. 138). This empirical hypothesis can be summarized as follows: all in all, with the expansion of the service sector, the sphere of labor loses its function as the traditional criteria of success, to which the social esteem for industrial labor had hitherto been experientially attached.

- b) The second causal chain which is at the root of the decline in the significance of industrial labor is not of an economic, but of a cultural nature: evidently, the degree to which employment determines individuals biographically and shapes them in a way characteristic for the particular labor situation is decreasing dramatically in the developed societies of the West. This decentralization of the labor sphere vis-à-vis other spheres of life, its marginalization in the individual's biography, is a phenomenon diagnosed by many theorists, though evaluated in extremely different manners (from Bell's conservatism, through Dahrendorf's liberalism, to Offe's 'left-wing' social theory). Nonetheless, because labor can only function as an ethical medium under conditions which, in the first place, permit that the laborers be able to find self-confirmation, approval and recognition as morally acting persons, as bearers of duties, the decline in the biographical significance of labor also points to a dissolution of the ethical medium of recognition constituted by industrial labor.

Thus, both tendencies can be summarized as follows: traditional patterns of self-realization lose their cultural support in the lifeworld's long-practiced forms of recognition. Just as the theorists of the "postmodern" correctly view it and of course they are not alone the decline of the industry-related value milieu is accompanied by the chance for a pluralization of individual life-forms; however, what these theorists cannot adequately take into account, because of their specific conception of freedom, is the fact that the experimental testing of new ways of life has so far lacked all social support in a newly emerging form of ethical life. Everyday cultural praxis is freed step-by-step from its received value commitments and traditions without them having already been replaced by comprehensive patterns of orientation, within which the individual subjects' attempts at self-realization could find intersubjective recognition; 2 succinctly formulated, it is this vacuum in recognition which first brings about the growing willingness to accept life styles prefabricated by the culture industry as aesthetic substitutes for socially depleted biographies.

If the above-sketched description is not totally erroneous, theories of the postmodern present an incorrect interpretation for correctly described processes of development: because they take a Nietzschean con-

cept of freedom as their point of departure, they are unable to reflect upon the appropriate cultural preconditions for the propagated pluralization of individual life styles; these preconditions would lie in the development of a postindustrial form of ethical life, a concept of which is totally lacking in postmodern social theories.

## Chapter 14

### The Limits of Liberalism:

#### On the Political-Ethical Discussion Concerning Communitarianism

One of the experiences which decisively shapes consciousness in contemporary Western industrial societies is the perception of an accelerated process of personal individualization. Although this process has been evaluated in both positive and negative terms, the individual's increasing detachment from pregiven social forms has come to be understood as a determining feature of our age, even to the point of heralding a new social epoch. The socio-structural developments which are the objective basis for the changed nature of experience have in the meantime been approximately defined by sociology: taken as a whole, the social liberation from traditional role expectations, the economically conditioned expansion of individual options for action, and finally the cultural erosion of social milieus which created a sense of community, have the effect of granting the individual the ability to exhibit an ever greater measure of autonomous achievement and thus augment the degree of individualization. 1 In philosophy, the idea of "post-modernism" which arose from a critique of reason was the first reaction to these changed social conditions. This approach understands the specific process of the accelerated pluralization of individual life-orientations to be a result of the definitive overcoming of universalistic moral princi-

ples; and, in an affirmative mode, declares this to be the liberation of consciousness from false "generalities." 2 In the meantime, however, the new situation of experience has also been reflected in an incomparably more important form more important because it is philosophically instructive and theoretically elucidating by a debate which has thus far ensued for the most part in the United States and which focuses on the foundations of political ethics as a whole. I am thinking of the criticism which various authors currently level at the atomistic premises of the liberalism represented above all in the work of John Rawls. Here, an awareness of the growing individualization of our society takes the form of an increased attention paid to the intersubjective conditions of human socialization. The philosophical questioning of the liberal tradition goes hand in hand with sociological investigations which attempt to demonstrate that the dissolution of value communities based on tradition gives rise to increased suffering among subjects owing to an absence of social contact. The confluence of philosophical and sociological critiques of liberalism yields a powerful theoretical current which has meanwhile come to be termed "communitarianism." 3

It would at first glance seem possible to reduce the point of contention in the debate between the liberals and the so-called "communitarians" to the question of the normative priority accorded either to the ideal of equal rights or to the vision of successful communities. The liberal position, indebted as it is to the tradition of contractarian theory, regards the expansion of legally-guaranteed liberties as the key point on which political ethics must focus, and this is a point, incidentally, which can only be justified in rational terms. By contrast, the communitarian position, which for its part is bound to the Classical Greek doctrine of the polis, or Hegel's notion of ethical life, advocates that all successful forms of political coexistence depend on the presence of commonly-shared values. In other words, whereas for liberals the idea of maximum, equally-distributed rights serves as the overriding standard of political justice, the idea of socially-binding value orientations functions among the communitarians as the decisive normative criterion for judging societies. However if the difference is left in such simple terms, then the importance of the controversy may well be overlooked, especially in a philosophical sense and, moreover, in its significance for an interpretation of the current state of experience. For the core of the debate hinges on the question of how a political ethics must take account of the conditions of freedom for socialized subjects if it is to arrive at a convincing concept of a just society. It is upon this bone of contention between the liberals and the communitarians that I shall focus: an attempt will be made to trace the debate in terms of the sequence that would rationally emerge if the arguments exchanged thus far were reconstructed

in terms of their rational content. In so doing, I shall defend the liberals' position up to the point where, in my view, the communitarians have a better, albeit not yet very clear, argument. The ultimate goal of my reconstruction is to make a contribution to the question of which philosophical considerations can be adduced as the basis for an appropriate judgment of the trends toward individualization in our society mentioned at the outset.

I shall begin with the objection with which Michael Sandel to a certain extent opened the debate in question: namely that John Rawls's theory of justice presupposes an atomistic concept of the subject and that this prevents him from recognizing the necessary priority of the good, in other words, of commonly-shared values, over the dimension of "rights." Rawls is able to come up with plausible arguments to refute this criticism by sacrificing the overly "narrow" concept of the subject which he had taken from the tradition of contractarian theory, while not losing sight of the heuristic aims of his theory of justice (I). The communitarians can only react to Rawls taking this step, as I will then attempt to show, by relating their proposal, namely the priority of the good, to the dimension of individual self-realization rather than to that of personal autonomy. In other words, they incorporate the distinction between "negative" and "positive" liberties into the justifications they propose. Although Rawls has to accept the argument if it is couched in these terms, he can, for his part, now put the same question to the communitarians, asking whether they can distinguish normatively between various substantive contents of the "good" (II). The third will establish that the communitarians are inadvertently forced to sacrifice their neo-Aristotelian premises in their attempt to supply an answer to Rawls's return question. For, in the face of the liberals' skepticism, they can only uphold their idea that individual self-realization must be linked back to an horizon of commonly-shared values by substituting the moral justification of morality with a normative concept of ethical life (III).

# I

The normative core of Rawls's theory consists of two principles which are intended to balance out the relation between the goal of maximum rights and the law of economic justice. As is well-known, he initially attempted to justify the claim to universality that his theory of justice made by means of a conception based on contractual law. Rawls begins with the fictitious conditions of an original position in which subjects, with a purposive rational orientation and under a veil of ignorance vis-à-vis their future social position, deliberate with each other as

to which organizational form of society they should contractually agree upon. Under these conditions, they would, in all likelihood, decide on those two principles of justice which Rawls previously designated as normative. Rawls conceives of concluding a contract as a constitutional choice that can be traced by decision theory made between subjects oriented towards utilitarian benefit. When drawing up their decision the assembled individuals agree on the principle of the greatest possible freedoms and the principle of difference. This occurs because, taken together and under conditions in which the parties do not know what their future positions in society will be, the two principles can guarantee them an optimum of primary goods necessary for the self-realization of each person. 4 Now, the concept of the human subject latent in this contractarian conception is initially taken up by Michael Sandel to support his philosophical critique of liberalism and this set the specific course that the debate would subsequently take. To Sandel's mind, liberalism is linked systematically to the concept of the subject sketched above by maintaining that the idea of equal rights can only be given normative priority over a concept of the "good" if the subjects are erroneously thought of as beings who monologically select their goals.5 Sandel's original criticism of Rawls consequently comprises two steps: he first has to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the model of the human subject presupposed in contractarian theory in order then to prove that the fundamental liberal idea depends substantively on this incorrect concept of the subject.

In order to effect the first task Sandel utilizes an anthropology which, while remaining indeterminate in terms of methodology, largely takes an implicitly phenomenological approach.6 According to Sandel, if, as in Rawls's theory, the conclusion of a contract is conceived of as a process made in terms of decision theory then the following characteristics are necessarily attributed to human beings: they are isolated and autonomous, and choose individual goals for their lives in terms of a purposive-rational calculation of their respective interests. To speak here of a "choice" also means that the person's relationship to his life goals is construed as one of subsequent control. For the subject is assumed always to possess sufficient distance from all possible value orientations to enable her to choose amongst them free from external constraint as if she were making a decision to buy something. To this degree, however, the moral person presupposed in this conception is not only isolated and autonomous, but rather also an initially unsituated, and to a certain extent neutral, subject: we have to do with "a subject of possession, individuated in advance and given prior to its ends."7 Opposing this concept, Sandel initially proposes that subjects cannot be

meaningfully described independently of the life goals and value orientations which respectively determine them. Sandel argues that every human person has already been shaped so constitutively by some life goal or other that she in principle cannot ever be in that situation presupposed for the act of selectionnamely, of being able to adopt a distanced attitude toward all possible life goals. It is therefore wrong to proceed from a concept of a subject that is unsituated and ethically neutral. Rather, we must always count on there being persons who are already "radically situated," 8 or, in other words, people who have always conceived of themselves within the horizon of specific notions of value and who have acted within that framework. As Sandel notes:

The problem here (is) not the distance of self from its ends, but rather the fact that the self, being unbounded in advance, (is) awash with possible purposes and ends, all impinging indiscriminately on its identity, threatening always to engulf it. The challenge to the agent (is) to sort out the limits or the boundaries of the self, to distinguish the subject from its situation, and so to forge its identity.<sup>9</sup>

Given that these identity-generating life goals are, in addition, only acquired intersubjectively, namely by means of communicatively-mediated processes of cultural socialization, the initial underlying assumption of independent subjects who are isolated from one another is untenable in theoretical terms. For no matter how individually distinct a person may be, she draws her understanding of herself from a cultural store of intersubjectively-shared value orientations; consequently, it is, philosophically speaking, impossible to conceive of the human subject as a solipsistic, pre-societal being.

Assuming that this approach does demonstrate that the concept of the subject presupposed by Rawls is theoretically untenable, indeed wrong, then the next step in this refutation of Rawls's position must consist in showing that the basic liberal idea does hinge substantively on such a concept of the subject. Sandel embarks on solving the problems this entails by attempting to show that the idea of equal rights can only be granted normative precedence over a concept of the good life if the anthropological premise of isolated and unsituated subjects is taken as given. For, according to his argument, it is only meaningful to regard the legal protection of the individual's freedom of decision as the central goal of a just society if subjects are thought of as beings each of whom monologically chooses his or her goals. If we assume of subjects that they define their value premises in an isolated process of choice, then they

must initially have their individual autonomy protected from the normative influences of the community. The institution of equal rights constitutes such a neutral protective apparatus which, because it involves no further-reaching definition of the common good, leaves every individual subject to make her own decision. For this reason, the basic liberal idea of universal basic rights is the necessary complement to an atomistic conception of the moral person: "On the right-based ethics, it is precisely because we are essentially separate, independent selves that we need a neutral framework, a framework of rights that refuses to choose among competing purposes and ends. If the self is prior to its ends, then the right must be prior to the good." 10 If the subject, on the other hand, is conceived of as having been socialized through communication and as searching for her life goals not on her own but through intercourse with others, then the preferential relationship of "rights" and "values" has, as it were, to be inverted. For in order to be able to arrive at an appropriate understanding of herself free from external constraints, the individual has to be able to presume the existence of an intact community in which she can be sure of the solidarity of all others. To this extent, the concept of the "radically situated" person derived from the critique of atomism necessarily engenders the normative precedence of the vision of commonly-shared values over the idea of equal rights.

It is this second step in Sandel's argument which Rawls can now criticize with good reason in order to defend the underlying idea of his theory of justice. Even if, or so one might argue if putting the case on his behalf, the identity of an individual is always constituted by a specific interpretation of the good life, the idea of equal rights has to be accorded a preferential status in responding to the question of what the form of a well-ordered society should be. For the individual search for the good and it would in fact be more appropriate to describe this as a process of communicatively-mediated self-understanding than as an act of monological choice requires that the social collective protect certain basic rights and a basic standard of living. The legal guarantee of personal autonomy is not something which stands in the way of the intersubjective process of personal identity formation, but rather, conversely, first makes it feasible in society. Without a certain measure of economic prosperity and without legally guaranteed basic liberties the individual subject would not be in a position in the first place to deal with alternative ideas of the good without being subject to external constraint and if necessary to derive benefit from them for his own life plan. There is consequently no logically compelling link that obtains between the atomistic concept of the "unsituated" subject and the liberal idea of



equal rights. Rather, granting basic legal liberties a normative status can even be justified if Sandel's anthropological criticism is accepted and the subjects are conceived of as "radically situated" beings who have always already undergone socialization through communication. One cannot precisely infer the *normative* priority of the good over the "right" from the "*ontological*" precedence of the good in the context of human life. 11 By contrast, the "right" merits normative priority because only if the individual autonomy of every person is respected can the human being's "ontologically" driven search for the "good" become possible without being subject to coercion. 12

Now, Rawls can in fact go even another step beyond this mere defence of his basic model by posing to Sandel the question of whether he can avoid the reference to a normative standard of basic equal rights when judging political events. One example which Rawls would be able to deploy here is that of the American Civil Rights movement cited by Sandel. As Sandel's thesis has it both the Rawlsian liberal and the communitarian would want to defend the movement's political objectives in normative terms, but would have to make use of very different arguments in order to do so: "The civil rights movement of the 1960s might be justified by liberals in the name of human dignity and respect for persons, and by communitarians in the name of recognizing the full membership of fellow citizens wrongly excluded from the common life of the nation." 13 Rawls will object at this point that what the term "wrongly" is supposed to mean in this case can after all only be concluded from the implicit reference to that standard of universal and equal civil rights for which the theory of justice seeks to provide justifications. For if one fails to presuppose the basic principle of universal human rights such as is contained in the U.S. Constitution then one is not in a position to justify the normative assertion that a particular group of people are "wrongly" denied the legal status of fully-fledged citizens. However, before Rawls can bring the full potential of this argument to bear against the communitarians' approach, he first has to acknowledge the differentiations which the opposing camp has meanwhile made in reply to his detachment of the normative principle of law from the atomistic concept of the person on which it was founded.

## II

The first part of our reconstruction has shown that John Rawls can justify the normative priority of justice over the good even after conceding at the ontological level that subjects have always already orientated

themselves towards certain values which they share in common with others through interaction. For the principles of justice he develops are initially intended only for a negative purpose, namely to protect the individual within the community against social and economic sanctions which would constrain him when practically exploring his individual life goals. Of course, Rawls also has to concede at the same time that an acceptance of Sandel's anthropological objection compels him to revise the justifications he had initially provided for his project. The fiction of a contract between individuals whose purposive-rational calculation generates the hub of justification in Rawls's theory is no longer possible once human subjects cease to be conceived of as isolated and neutral beings, and are, by contrast, grasped as beings who have already become socialized and bear value orientations.

This may help to explain the direction which Rawls took when he further developed his conception of the "theory of justice." Although he does not renounce the proceduralist construction of an "original position," he nevertheless moves towards a new interpretation in which the value of the construction for the justifications of the principles of justice is treated in more communitarian terms. In "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical," an essay of central importance for this development in his theory, 14 Rawls initially emphasizes that his conception of justice is context specific. The conception is thought of as a "political" not a "metaphysical" project: "it starts from within a certain political tradition," namely the political tradition of Western democracies. It should be noted that this assertion runs against the grain of Rawls's prior understanding of his theory.<sup>15</sup> The ideal person which forms the normative basis of the theory is not some abstract subject furnished with certain abilities; rather, the subject involved is the "normal" citizen of a Western democracy. In line with the communitarian approach, moral persons are now introduced as "situated" subjects who share common convictions. In the new construction, the assumption is made that in their striving to set cooperative goals these subjects accept the thought experiment of an "original position" as a "device of representation."<sup>16</sup> Given factual conditions in which divergent notions of the good exist, the fictitious restrictions of such a situation of consultation appear to the subjects as the adequate expression of the normative ideals that they share with regard to a just system of social cooperation. Rawls consequently regards the ideal of contractual agreement as a normative procedure which is in turn first founded in the collectively shared value-convictions of citizens of Western democracies. This contextual link of the "original position" back to a certain tradition of morality can be understood as a compromise between his original proceduralism and the objections of his communitarian critics.

The communitarians, however, are compelled in their reaction to Rawls's counterargument to specify more closely the normative content of their critique of liberalism. Yet, the anthropological verification of the priority of the social community over the individual should not be applied in order to cast theoretical aspersions on the moral principle of individual autonomy. This is so because the process of ethical self-assurance, if conceived of as intersubjective in nature, has to be safeguarded against social and economic limitations. It is correct to pursue individual autonomy as a moral principle even if we assume that the personal identity of the subject only takes shape given a socially intact community. For it is a legally guaranteed liberty of action which first enables the individual to come to terms with the ethical values of the world in which he lives and, if necessary, to adopt them for himself, without being subject to external constraint in the process. The communitarians are able to react to this preliminary conclusion theoretically by shifting their critique of liberalism back from the level of individual autonomy to that of personal self-realization. Given such a shift, the conviction that normative claims can be made for the process of realizing personal life goals irrespective of the reference to commonly-shared values seems to indicate a flaw in the liberal position. This critique of liberalism is somewhat more moderate than Sandel's formulation, and its argumentative underpinnings are to be found in Charles Taylor's theory of liberty as well as in Alasdair MacIntyre's model of personality.

In order to present his reservations about the liberal model of society Taylor draws on the distinction developed by Isaiah Berlin between negative and positive conceptions of liberty. However he accords the two notions a somewhat different meaning than that given to them by Berlin in his famous essay. 17 Taylor contends that the idea of negative liberty a key achievement of the tradition of political liberalism merely represents a concept of how individual liberty might be possible. It is limited because it only represents an answer to the question as to which social safeguards enable the individual subject to determine autonomously his individual life goals within the framework of the commonality. On his own account Taylor believes that the idea of positive liberty which emerged from the critique of liberalism holds the seeds of a model for the practical realization of individual freedom. For such an approach also endeavours to answer the question as to which social preconditions have to exist if the individual is in reality to be able to avail himself of his legally ordained right to self-realization:

Doctrines of positive freedom are concerned with a view of freedom which involves essentially the exercising of control over

one's life. On this view, one is free only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life. The concept of freedom here is an exercise concept. By contrast, negative theories can rely simply on an opportunity-concept, where being free is a matter of what we can do, of what is open to us to do, whether or not we do anything to exercise these options. 18

The difficulties which Taylor has in mind in this context with respect to distinguishing between "opportunity" and "reality" stem from the claims that are implicitly associated with the word "essential" in the context of "exercising control over one's life." The modern idea of exercising a legally secured liberty includes the notion that we only follow and implement those personal goals of which we can be sure that they "really" are our own. All individual wishes are "real" or "factual" if we are able to identify with them, and are not compelled to do so, because we have been able to explore them both independently of external influences and without there being any inner compulsion to do so. In turn, such an "inner" freedom points to a certain degree of "self-awareness" and "moral discrimination," "self-control" and transparent needs.<sup>19</sup> To this extent, the "realization" of freedom presumes the existence of certain abilities among the individuals involved, which are not taken into consideration by negative notions. Further, Taylor assumes that the development of these abilities depends on the existence of intact communities.

The arguments which Taylor deploys in attempting to buttress this central proposition of his critique of liberalism originate in an "anthropological" concept of the human person which, in common with Sandel's notion, concentrates on human evaluative self-understanding.<sup>20</sup> Human subjects are, for Taylor, beings who exhibit the special ability of being able to adopt an evaluative stance towards their own intentions or wishes.<sup>21</sup> We normally encounter such "second order desires" in the form of feelings or moods which signal to us whether our current primary intentions agree or conflict with the convictions that guide us. However, such feelings are themselves not "directly" given, but depend on interpretations that are imbued with a cognitive knowledge both of the conditions of our situation and our personal abilities. The cognitive contexts of our affective self-interpretation are open to correction by the external judgement of others given that these contents can be true or false, that is, can reproduce the corresponding conditions or abilities either appropriately or inappropriately. Nevertheless, such a helpful correction to our self-interpretation can only be forthcoming from beings who share our orientation towards the goal of self-realization. To this extent, the forma-

tion of inner freedom presupposes the existence of a social community whose members know that they agree on the positive evaluation of the self-realization. 22

It follows from the arguments outlined above that the individual subject can never be completely sure of his "authentic" life goals without resorting to communicative aids. Indeed, he is not even capable of securing them for himself. Rather, I only find out which values I actually want to guide me in my life to the degree that I interact with others who support me in ascertaining my needs and who will, if necessary, protect me from self-deceptions. As a consequence, the presence of legal provisions for individual self-determination only ensures that liberty is possible, whereas the practical creation of freedom depends on the existence of an additional prerequisite, namely, a life form in which the subjects can mutually participate empathetically in the ethical self-assurance of their respective partners in interaction. In his essays, Taylor mentions a series of social conditions on which such a culture of empathy in solidarity must rest. These include above all a republican form of political morality "for we have not only to maintain these practices and institutions which *protect* liberty but also those which sustain the *sense* of liberty." 23 This being the case, other forms of mutual recognition which encourage the individual to continue on his path to self-realization must also be involved. Taken together, these definitions point to a model of community in which the subjects are able to establish a relationship based on mutual solidarity precisely because they regard liberty as their common possession. The individual, in other words, is only rendered capable of practicing his legally guaranteed liberty if he is an active member of a social community, the cohesion of which has emerged from a mutually-shared value orientation toward freedom.

This train of thought implies that Rawls's basic liberal model will inevitably run into difficulties as soon as the principle of self-determination *and* the conditions for its realization are taken into consideration. For the prerequisites for individual realization of freedom obviously cannot be adequately defined without reference to such commonly-shared values, and it is these which the liberal specifically seeks to exclude in order to preserve the ethical neutrality of the theory. However, only the solidarity of partners in interaction can legally guaranteed liberties be realized in practice, and this presupposes that a social community exists whose members know themselves to be of one accord in their commitment to specific ethical values. 24 Alasdair MacIntyre comes to a similar conclusion when investigating the conditions of personal self-realization in order to question the premises of modern

"liberal individualism." 25 He is interested in demonstrating that, unlike the dominant opinion on the matter, we are today still compelled to understand individual life as an occurrence, the success of which depends on the acquisition of certain virtues. To this end, he endeavours to show that human individuals must interpret their lives as the search for the "good." MacIntyre proceeds from the assumption that for individual existence to be experienced meaningfully it must be able to be described in terms of a story. If I am not able to present my life narratively in the formal framework of a beginning and end, then it has no point of reference to instil it with unity, no point from which it can become instilled with "sense" or "meaning" for me. Accordingly experiencing one's life as something that can no longer be narrated in terms of such a teleological schema usually goes hand in hand with the painful experience of existential meaninglessness, something that can be heightened to the point of an intention to commit suicide.<sup>26</sup> Every life must be aimed at a goal if it is to be open to narration; from such a goal one has to say that in a certain, weak sense it exhibits an ethical quality. For, only to the extent that every overarching goal must also contain "criteria for success or failure"<sup>27</sup> of the form I have given my life, that is that it include moral claims, can it serve via reference back to a constructed beginning as the reference point for such a narrative account of my life. As a consequence, the narrative form of organizing human life demands the depiction of the "quest for the good," in terms of which the individual episodes can be construed meaningfully as "harms, dangers, temptations and distractions."<sup>28</sup> However, in order to be able to view all the disparate episodes of a life from one such uniform vantage point, it is necessary also to refer to the mediating authority of social roles, by means of which the subject always remains subliminally connected to the history of a humane society. If stripped of the tasks and traditions which allow me to be a member of a community, my life would lack the overarching point of orientation and the social framework through which I can provide a narrative account of a steadfast, if not continuous search for the "good":

For the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from the past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships.<sup>29</sup>

To this extent, every form of individual self-realization necessarily presupposes reference to socially-shared values for it must be possible to render it in the form of a narrative, just as every narrated life, in turn, implicitly contains reference to a social community.

It need not presently concern us that MacIntyre develops his analysis of the narratability of human life with a view to rehabilitating the classical doctrine of virtue; that is, his attempt to derive the normative validity of certain character traits in the present from the demands which the "quest for the good" places upon behavioural features. 30 All that is pertinent here is the fact that he arrives at the same conclusion as Charles Taylor, namely, that the self-realization of the individual subject is tied to a social precondition, more precisely, that the community is constituted by common value references. Both Taylor and MacIntyre believe that the context of a social community must necessarily figure among the preconditions for an authentic realization of freedom, that is, a social community whose inner commitment to certain values is shared by the subject. For in the absence of such an ethical consensus the individual would be deprived of the consent which he must be able to rely on when attempting to realize his life goals within society. This proposition marks the point in the debate at which a definite limitation of liberalism would appear to emerge. Given that the liberalist tradition insists that normative status may not be granted to any specific ethical value, it is not possible within the framework of such theories to develop the idea of a community that is integrated in terms of a notion of ethical life, even though, it is precisely this which we evidently have to presuppose when trying to explain the process of the individual realization of freedom. Liberalism is also forced to conceive of the process by which one puts one's life goals into practice in terms of the very same pattern which it employed, initially with good reason, when conceiving of the creation of personal autonomy through a notion of rightsnamely, the neutralization of overarching community ties.

The basic error of atomism in all its forms is that it fails to take account of the degree to which the free individual with his own goals and aspirations, whose just rewards it is trying to protect, is himself only possible within a certain kind of civilization; that it took a long development of certain institutions and practices, of the rule of law, of rules of equal respect, of habits of common deliberation, of common association, of cultural self-development, and so on, to produce the modern individual; and that without these the very sense of oneself as an individual in the modern meaning of the term would atrophy.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense, the reproach with which Sandel already attempted unjustifiably to annul the liberal principle of the precedence of equal rightsthat is that it was atomisticis, and only in a certain sense, now justified at this, the second stage in the debate. For the very reason that



liberalism has categorically uncoupled moral subjects from all intersubjectively shared references to values, it cannot adequately clarify those social preconditions under which these subjects can individually put the liberties which are legally accorded to them into practice. Rawls will have to concede that this is lacking in liberalism. After all, he stumbled upon the necessary connection between self-realization and commonly-shared values when devising his concept of "self-esteem." However, he can now, in return, put the question to the communitarians as to which normative principles they can deploy in order to provide justifications for distinguishing between right and wrong notions of the good life.

### III

Rawls's counterquestion opens up what has thus far been the final round in the debate which is taking place between the representatives of liberalism and communitarianism in American philosophy. This latest stage in the discussion has focused on a problem which is difficult to solve. This is the question of how I can assign normative validity to one of the numerous models of a commonly-shared "good" once I concede that well integrated communities play a constitutive part in the realization of individual freedoms. However, this question to a certain extent affects both sides in the politico-philosophical debate. For, having in recent years dropped the system of justifications based on contractarian theory, Rawls has and this has to do with the communitarian objections also relinquished the claim his theory made to the universality and has limited the domain for which it is valid to the horizon of the tradition of Western democracies. Consequently, he also confronts the question as to what reasons can be given for granting the tradition of ethical life of this particular community a normative status above all others. The communitarians, on the other hand, and to the extent that they are challenged to provide an explication of their concept of community, begin to become increasingly embroiled in a theoretical self-contradiction. For as soon as they attempt to explicate concrete concepts of the collective good, they intuitively make use of universalistic principles. We have already seen this to be the case in Sandel's use of the word "wrongly," and in Taylor's case, it comes to light in the consistent reference to the moral idea of individual autonomy. It also comes to the surface in MacIntyre's work when he states that a stance of argumentative openness is the feature characterizing a rational tradition. At the same time, however, all three communitarians are sufficiently con-



vinced of their contextualist premises that they do not make these implicit principles normatively restrictive conditions which have to be imposed on every definition of a collective good. Rather, they tend to run the danger of having to distinguish every form of community formation as normative if it fulfils the function of generating value-related forms of solidarity.

The problem this brings with it cannot, however, be answered without responding to the decisive question as to which level of aggregation of social integration is normatively desirable in community formation. There is, after all, a great deal of difference in the communitarian argument between speaking of value-related community formation solely with a view to the intermediate groups and associations involved or with regard to the interactive relationship between all citizens, in other words, Hegel's notion of ethical life in the state. The first option amounts merely to a diluted form of communitarianism, for it simply asserts that membership of some form of "value community" is part and parcel of the conditions for realizing individual liberty. As Michael Walzer has shown, such a thesis can in principle be reconciled with liberalism since the state would have to transcend its ethical neutrality only in the narrow realm of active, legal promotion of group solidarity (family policy, educational and cultural policies for minorities, etc.). 32 Things are different, however, if it is assumed that "ethical" community formation is necessary for the level of overall social integration. Such a position could be justified if, following Taylor, it was asserted that the formation of group solidarity within societies can also only succeed completely if it receives social backing in the shape of the active, value-related agreement of all citizens on the forms of solidarity. Such a proposition would first take us truly beyond the political-philosophical limits of liberalism.

For this reason, and leaving aside the special problem for the communitarians, both sides currently find themselves in very much the same dilemma. They no longer have any supra-contextual criterion with which to distinguish justifiably between morally acceptable and morally objectionable concepts of the collective good. The reason for this is that they wish, in their employment of contextualistic arguments, to abstain from providing a universalist foundation for the principles of morality anchored in the constitutional principles of western democracy. Yet, both sides are at the same time all the more dependent on such a criterion because in the meantime they widely agree that without any link to value convictions there is an inability to clarify the conditions under which individual freedom is realized. Evidently, the only way out of this theoretical cul-de-sac in which the politico-philosophical debate

presently threatens to get stuck is to adopt a formal model of ethical life. Such a model conceives of the universalistic principles of a post-conventional morality as constituting the delimiting conditions of every community-based model of the good. For, in such a case, all those collective notions of the good life would be acceptable which are sufficiently reflexive and pluralistic as not to violate the principle of the individual autonomy of each and every subject. In my opinion, discourse ethics currently offers the most suitable point of departure with respect to providing the justifications for such a post-conventional principle of morality. It is, on the one hand, not affected by the anthropological criticisms which the communitarians justifiably raised with regard to Rawls's original approach because the methods of justification using the rules of linguistic interaction departs from the premise of subjects who are both socialized and situated. Yet, on the other hand, given that it is concerned with justifying the principles for granting equal respect to the autonomy of every individual, its moral goal coincides with the approach Rawls takes to a theory of justice. 33 Needless to say, the ethics of discourse must at the same time conceive of its principle of morality as a delimiting condition of a concept of the good which has still to be developed if it is to be able to fulfil the task of liberating both communitarianism and contemporary liberalism from their contextualist premises; that is, by offering them a normative concept of community. It can, however, only acquire such a formal model of ethical life if it takes on the great challenge of Hegel's philosophy for a second time.

## Chapter 15

### Integrity and Disrespect:

#### Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on a Theory of Recognition\*

In his book *Natural Law and Human Dignity*, Ernst Bloch sought to uncover a single moral intuition at the heart of the widely divergent approaches taken in the tradition of natural law. As is well known, the conclusion he reached in this study, which remains a fascinating document for the modern reader, was that unlike the eudemonic intentions characteristic of social utopias, natural law takes as its goal the protection of human dignity. Employing a sober idiom characterized by analytical distinctions and utterly devoid of the expressiveness of which he was a master, Bloch writes at a decisive point in the book: "Social utopias primarily aim to bring about happiness, or at least to eliminate distress and the conditions which preserve or generate it. Theories of natural law aim . . . primarily to bring about dignity, human rights, juridical guarantees for the security or liberty of man, treating these as categories of human pride. Social utopias are, accordingly, oriented predominantly toward the elimination of human misery, natural law predominantly toward the elimination of human degradation." <sup>1</sup> The fact that Bloch approaches the problem negatively here reveals two considerations of principle which function as determining premisses in his

reasoning. The first holds that the essence of everything which, in moral theory, is known as "human dignity" can only be ascertained indirectly, by determining the forms of personal degradation and injury. The second supposes that it was only such negative experiences of disrespect and insult which turned the normative goal of securing human dignity into a driving force in history. The first premise would appear to rest on a proposition put in the terms of moral philosophy, the second premise on a thesis ascribable to what might be called moral sociology. Since Bloch employs the two only as theoretical backdrop for a Marxist appropriation of the natural law tradition, he allows both to stand as unresolved philosophical hypotheses. Although he situates them at the center of his arguments on moral theory, in order to uphold the hermeneutic framework of his study he refrains from turning these premises themselves into an object of independent reflection. This approach, however, caused him to overlook what actually is the philosophical point of his book. If a concept of the dignity, the complete integrity of the person, is only to be approximated by determining what forms personal insult and disrespect take, then, conversely, it would hold that the constitution of human integrity is dependent on the experience of intersubjective recognition. Without realizing it, Bloch avails himself of a normative theory of mutual recognition; according to this theory, the integrity of human subjects, vulnerable as they are to injury through insult and disrespect, depends on their receiving approval and respect from others. In the remarks that follow, I shall attempt to pursue a bit further the project of exploring the interrelation between disrespect and human integrity that Bloch initiated, in negative terms, but did not carry out. Starting from the first premise of Bloch's study, I shall seek to draw a systematic distinction between different forms of personal disrespect (I). This differentiation of three basic forms of disrespect will, in a subsequent step, yield indirect insights into the totality of experiences of recognition on which a person depends for the safeguarding of his integrity (II). Only after undertaking this excursus into the theory of recognition can I conclude by treating Bloch's second premise, which, cast in the terms of moral sociology, claims that the experience of personal disrespect represents a moral driving force in the process of societal development (III).

# I

The language of everyday life is still invested with a knowledge which we take for granted that we implicitly owe our integrity to the receipt of approval or recognition from other persons. Up to the present

day, when individuals who see themselves as victims of moral maltreatment describe themselves, they assign a dominant role to categories which, as with "insult" or "degradation," are related to forms of disrespect, to the denial of recognition. Negative concepts of this kind are used to characterize a form of behavior which does not represent an injustice solely because it constrains the subjects in their freedom for action or does them harm. Rather, such behavior is injurious because it impairs these persons in their positive understanding of selfan understanding acquired by intersubjective means. There could be no meaningful use whatsoever of the concepts of "disrespect" or "insult" were it not for the implicit reference to a subject's claim to be granted recognition by others. Hence the language of everyday life, which Bloch himself, too, invokes as a matter of course, contains references to a concept based on the theory of intersubjectivity; this concept holds that the inviolability and integrity of human beings depends upon approval offered by others. Not only Hegel's theory of recognition, but especially G. H. Mead's social psychology transformed this intuitive knowledge into a basis for the framework of a systematic theory. According to this theory, human individuation is a process in which the individual can unfold a practical identity to the extent that he is capable of reassuring himself of recognition by a growing circle of communicative partners. 2 Subjects capable of language and action are constituted as individuals solely by learning, from the perspective of others who offer approval, to relate to themselves as beings who possess certain positive qualities and abilities. Thus, as their consciousness of their individuality grows, they come to depend to an ever increasing extent on the conditions of recognition they are afforded by the life-world of their social environment. That particular human vulnerability signified by the concept of "disrespect" arises from this interlocking of individuation and recognition, on which both Hegel and Mead based their inquiries. Since, in his normative image of selfsomething Mead would call his "Me"every individual is dependent on the possibility of constant reassurance by the Other, the experience of disrespect poses the risk of an injury which can cause the identity of the entire person to collapse.

It is obvious that we use the terms "disrespect" or "insult" in everyday language to designate a variety of degrees of psychological injury to a subject. The use of a single expression would threaten to efface the categorical difference between the blatant degradation which is bound up with the deprivation of basic human rights and the subtle humiliation which accompanies public statements as to the failings of a given person. However, the fact that we are also intuitively inclined to break down the positive counter-concept of "respect" into a number of intuitive gradations already implies that internal differences exist be-

tween individual forms of disrespect. Kant's introduction of the concept of respect into the field of moral theory is attested to in a discussion of the notion still underway today. There, a variety of means be they phenomenological or drawn from an analytical philosophy of language have been employed in an attempt to distinguish between the differing degrees and modes of respect accorded another person in terms of which his personality traits achieve recognition.<sup>3</sup> As I seek to set up a systematic classification of three forms of "disrespect," I shall be implicitly referring back to this debate. The differences between these forms are measured by the degree to which they can upset a person's practical relationship to self by depriving this person of the recognition of certain claims to identity.

If we base our standards of comparison on such an approach, it would appear sensible to start from a type of disrespect which pertains to a person's physical integrity. Those forms of practical maltreatment in which a person is forcibly deprived of any opportunity to dispose freely over his own body represent the most fundamental type of personal degradation. This is the case because every attempt to seize control of a person's body against his will, irrespective of the intention involved, causes a degree of humiliation which, by comparison to other forms of disrespect, has a more profoundly destructive impact on an individual's practical relationship to self. For what is special about such forms of physical injury, as exemplified by torture or rape, is not the raw pain experienced by the body, but rather the coupling of this pain with the feeling of being defenceless and at the mercy of another subject, to the point of being deprived of all sense of reality.<sup>4</sup> The physical maltreatment of a subject represents a type of disrespect which does lasting damage to the subject's confidence, acquired at an early stage, that he can coordinate his own body autonomously. Hence one of the consequences, coupled with a type of social shame, is the loss of self-confidence and trust in the world, and this adversely affects all practical interaction with other subjects, even at a physical level. Through the experience of this type of disrespect, therefore, the person is deprived of that form of recognition which is expressed in unconditional respect for autonomous control over his own body, a form of respect acquired first and foremost through experiencing emotional attachment in the socialization process. The successful integration of physical and emotional qualities of behavior is thus shattered post facto from without, crippling the most fundamental form of the practical relationship to self, namely confidence in oneself.

This extreme type of disrespect, which interrupts the continuity of a positive image of self even at the corporeal level, is to be distin-

guished from forms of degradation which affect a person's normative understanding of self. I am referring to those forms of personal disrespect which a subject undergoes by being structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights within a given society. We can construe the term "rights" to signify those individual claims which a person can legitimately expect society to fulfill, since, as a fully-fledged member of a community, he has an equal right to participate in its institutional order. Should he now be systematically denied certain rights of this kind, the implication is that he is not deemed to possess the same degree of moral accountability as other members of society. The distinguishing feature of such forms of disrespect, as typified by the denial of rights or by social ostracism, thus lies not solely in the comparative restriction of personal autonomy, but in the combination of these restrictions with the feeling that the subject lacks the status of a full-fledged partner in interaction who possesses equal moral rights. For the individual, having socially valid legal rights withheld signifies a violation of the person's intersubjective expectation that she will be recognized as a subject capable of reaching moral judgments. To this extent, the experience of being denied rights is typically coupled with a loss of self-respect, of the ability to relate to oneself as a partner to interaction in possession of equal rights on a par with all other individuals. 5 Through the experience of this type of disrespect, therefore, the person is deprived of that form of recognition which takes the shape of cognitive respect for moral accountability. The latter, for its part, was only painstakingly acquired in the interactive processes involved in socialization.

This second type of disrespect, which has a detrimental effect on a subject's normative understanding of self, is to be set off from a third and final type of degradation, which entails negative consequences for the social value of individuals or groups. Only with these, as it were, evaluative forms of disrespect, namely the denigration of individual or collective lifestyles, do we actually arrive at the form of behavior for which our everyday language provides such designations as "insult" or "degradation." The "honor," "dignity" or, to use the modern term, "status" of a person can be understood to signify the degree of social acceptance forthcoming for a person's method of self-realization within the horizon of cultural traditions in a given society.<sup>6</sup> If this hierarchy of societal values is structured so as to downgrade individual forms of life and convictions as being inferior or deficient, then it robs the subjects in question of every opportunity to accord social value to their abilities. Once confronted with an evaluation that downgrades certain patterns of self-realization, those who have opted for these patterns cannot relate to

their mode of life as one which is invested with positive significance within their community. The individual who experiences this type of social devaluation, therefore, typically falls prey to a loss of self-esteem that is, he is no longer in a position to conceive of himself as a being whose characteristic traits and abilities are worthy of esteem. Through the experience of this type of disrespect, therefore, the person is deprived of the form of recognition which is expressed in society's approval of a type of self-realization that the person had only been able to acquire with the help of the encouragement derived from group solidarity.

It is a standard feature of the three groups of experiences of disrespect which have been distinguished in the foregoing analysis that their consequences for the individual are regularly described with metaphors derived from states of decay of the human body. Psychological studies investigating the personal aftereffects of experiencing torture or rape frequently speak of "psychological death." Research into the collective working through of the experiences of being denied rights and of social ostracism, which takes slavery as its example, now routinely operates with the concept of "social death." And the category of "injury" occupies a privileged position in discussions of the kind of disrespect associated with the cultural downgrading of a form of living. 7 These metaphorical allusions to physical suffering and death express the fact that the various forms of disrespect for psychological integrity take on the same negative role which organic diseases play in the context of body processes. The experience of social degradation and humiliation jeopardizes the identity of human beings to the same degree as the suffering of illnesses jeopardizes their physical well-being. If there is any truth in this link suggested by the conventions of our language, it follows that our survey of the various forms of disrespect should also enable us to draw conclusions as to the factors which foster what may be termed psychological "health" or human integrity. Seen in this light, the preventive treatment of illnesses would correspond to the social guarantee of relations of recognition which are capable of providing the subject with the greatest possible protection from an experience of disrespect. In the second section I would like briefly to try to illuminate the thesis which this analagous relation implies.

## II

If, taking our cue from Ernst Bloch, we regard the defense of human integrity through protection from degradation and insult as the central moral theme of the various strands of the natural law tradition,



then we can begin to reformulate our problem in positive terms. The classification of three forms of disrespect, which has been the focal point of the present inquiry up to this point, itself contains an indirect reference to intersubjective relationships of recognition whose collective existence forms the prerequisite for human integrity. As Hegel and Mead convincingly demonstrated, subjects capable of action owe their potential for developing a positive relationship to self to the experience of mutual recognition. Since it can only learn self-confidence and self-respect from the perspective of the approving reactions of partners to interaction, their practical ego is dependent on intersubjective relationships in which it will be able to experience recognition. This being the case, it must be possible to apply to these relationships of mutual recognition the same distinctions as we have observed between the various forms of social disrespect. After all, each type of insult and degradation which we examined involved the injury of a specific instance of positive relationship to self, which, in turn, it seems can only come about if the corresponding specific relation of recognition exists. To this extent, the differentiation of three forms of disrespect provides us with the key to classifying an identical number of relationships of mutual recognition. If this argumentation is accurate, then these relationships establish the moral infrastructure of a social life-world in which individuals can both acquire and preserve their integrity as human beings.

I started my distinctions with those forms of disrespect which are present in acts of physical humiliation such as torture or rape. These could be classed as the most fundamental type of human degradation because they strip a person of what has become a physical autonomy in interaction with self and thus destroy part of his basic trust in the world. What corresponds to this type of disrespect is a relation of recognition which, because it enables the individual to develop this body-related self-confidence in the first place, takes the form of emotional attachment, of the sort which Hegel, the Romantic, sought to express in the concept of "love." As needs and emotions, in a certain sense, can only receive "confirmation" by being directly satisfied or answered, recognition in this case must itself take the form of emotional approval and encouragement. This relation of recognition thus also depends on the concrete physical existence of other persons who acknowledge each other with special feelings of appreciation. The positive attitude which the individual is capable of assuming toward himself if he experiences this type of emotional recognition is that of self-confidence. I am referring, in other words, to the underlying layer of an emotional, body-related sense of security in expressing one's own needs and feelings, a layer which forms the psychological prerequisite for the development

of all further attitudes of self-respect. 8 There are no more general terms for this mode of reciprocal recognition beyond the circle of primary social relationships such as are to be found in emotional ties patterned after families, friendships and love relations. Because attitudes of emotional affirmation are tied to the prerequisites of attraction which individuals do not have at their unique disposal, these attitudes cannot be indefinitely extended to cover a large number of partners to interaction. Hence this relation of recognition inherently entails a moral particularism which no attempt at generalization can succeed in dissolving.

The physical maltreatment which has as its positive counterpart the emotional attachments in primary relationships of this kind was distinguished from a second form of disrespect, namely denying an individual's rights and ostracizing her socially. With this form, a human being incurs the dishonor of having the community refuse to grant her the moral accountability that would be attributed to a full-fledged legal member of that community. Accordingly, this type of disrespect must be paired with a condition of mutual recognition in which the individual learns to see herself from the perspective of her partners in interaction as a bearer of equal rights. The mechanism by which this takes place was identified by Mead as the process of assuming the perspective of a "generalized Other" who while simultaneously prescribing certain responsibilities, guarantees the Self (as in the practical relationship to self) that specific claims will be fulfilled. It follows that, in contrast to intimate relationships, this type of relation of recognition is invested with a primarily cognitive character: ego and alter mutually recognize each other as legal persons in that they share a knowledge of those norms by which their particular community secures the rights and responsibilities to which they are equally entitled. The positive attitude which a subject can assume toward herself if she experiences this kind of legal recognition is that of fundamental self-respect. She is able to consider herself a person who shares with all other members of his community the qualities of a morally accountable active subject.<sup>9</sup> This legal relationship contrasts with the relations of recognition in the primary relationship because it permits that medium of recognition unique to the subject to be generalized in two directions: it allows for the expansion of rights on both objective and social grounds. In the first instance, the rights are enhanced in terms of their material content; as a consequence, the individual differences in the opportunities for realizing intersubjectively guaranteed freedoms are increasingly taken into legal account. In the second instance, however, the legal relationship is universalized in the sense that a growing circle of hitherto excluded or disadvantaged

groups has the same rights extended to it as are enjoyed by all other members of the community. Hence the conditions under which rights are recognized inherently entail a principle of universalism, which unfolds in the course of historical struggles.

Finally, the third type of disrespect distinguished in the proposed classification above involves the downgrading of the social value of forms of self-realization. Such patterns of denigrative evaluation of certain forms of life rob the subjects in question of the potential for taking a positive view in the sense of social acceptance of the abilities they have acquired in the course of their lives. Accordingly, the counterpart of this form of disrespect is a relationship of recognition which can aid the individual in acquiring this kind of self-esteem a condition of solidarity with, and approval of, unconventional lifestyles. This condition would enable the subjects to find recognition based on mutual encouragement given their special characteristics as persons whose individuality has been formed by their specific biographies. Mead had this type of relation of recognition in mind when he argued that because the self (as in the practical relationship to self) had to reassure itself that it was not only an autonomous, but also an individuated being, it was also forced to assume the perspective of a "generalized other" who provides the self with intersubjective affirmation of its claims to uniqueness and irreplaceability. 10 The potential for this type of ethical self-reassurance is provided by a condition of mutual recognition in which ego and alter encounter one another against a horizon of values and goals, which signals to the respective other the indispensable significance of ego's life for him. Insofar as this form of recognition could not exist were it not for the vital experience of commonly shared burdens and responsibilities, it always goes beyond the bounds of the cognitive moment of ethical knowledge, incorporating an emotional element of solidarity and sympathy. The positive attitude which a subject can assume toward himself if he receives recognition in this form is that of acquiring esteem for himself: since he is respected by his partners to interaction as a person whose individuality has been formed in the course of a life history, the subject is capable of unqualified identification with his particular qualities and abilities. For Mead, then, the specific feature of such a relation of ethical recognition lies in the fact that it is geared internally towards the possibility of a successive opening toward the tendencies the self has for self-realization. The ethical norms in the light of which individuals mutually recognize their individual characteristics are open to a process of detraditionalization. As this process unfolds, increasing levels of generalization strip these norms of their prescriptive and hier-

archical character. Thus, a principle of egalitarian difference inheres in the relation of recognition based on solidarity or ethics, and it is a principle which can unfold if individualized subjects bring pressure to bear.

These three patterns of recognitionlove, right and solidarityset down the formal requirements for conditions of interaction within which human beings can feel assured of their "dignity" or integrity. These preconditions are "formal" in the sense that they, and the types of recognition on which they are based, are meant only to distinguish structural features of forms of communication. They do not go as far as to outline the institutional framework in which these forms may be realized. By listing the three patterns of recognition we have specified the moral infrastructures which must belong to a social life-world if it is to be able to protect its members. Accordingly, "integrity" can here again only mean that a subject may regard society as supporting him over the entire range of his practical relationships to self. If the subject participates in a social life-world in which the tripartite hierarchy of patterns of recognition is present, regardless of the concrete form these take, he may anchor his relationship to self in the positive modes of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. This line of thought, in other words, provides a way of restating in positive terms the moral-philosophical thesis which Bloch expounded in his major study. Morality, if understood as an institution for the protection of human dignity, defends the reciprocity of love, the universalism of rights and the egalitarianism of solidarity against their being relinquished in favor of force and repression. In other words, morality inherently contains an interest in the cultivation of those principles which provide a structural basis for the various forms of recognition. The second premise of Bloch's study, already identified as belonging to moral sociology, is that morality, understood in this manner, should in the process of history approach an element of social reality. The final section will address this second premise, although the argument will be restricted to references to a few key examples.

### III

At various points in his book, Bloch, always true, however, to the pathos which was his trademark, focuses attention on the sources of moral motivation underlying social change. Were it not for the added feeling of wounded dignity, Bloch writes, the mere experience of economic distress and political dependence would have never become a driving force of the practical revolutionary movements in history. To

economic privation or social repression there always had to be added the feeling among individuals that their claim to personal integrity had been disregarded. 11 Bloch advances reflections of this kind, for which his study is admittedly very short on historical evidence, in order to pinpoint a moral disposition in man which he regards as an empirical counterpart to the morality of natural law, defined by him in negative terms. Morality can expect practical support within social reality to come not from such sources of positive motivation as altruism or respect, but rather from the experience of social disrespect, which consistently and repeatedly makes itself heard. To my mind, this line of argument points toward an approach which serves partially to redress the failure of contemporary moral theory to deal adequately with the question of motivation.<sup>12</sup> However, this approach necessitates our anchoring the specific tasks of morality more directly in the intersubjective claims of corporeal subjects than is currently the case, to take one example, with attempts to ground morality in the theory of language.

If they are to establish a productive relationship to self, human beings are to return one last time to the insights shared by Hegel and Mead dependent on the intersubjective recognition of their abilities and achievements. Should this form of social approval fail to arise at any level of development, it opens up, as it were, a psychological gap within the personality, which seeks expression through the negative emotional reactions of shame or anger, offence or contempt. The experience of disrespect is as a consequence always accompanied by emotions which disclose to the individual that, in principle, society is depriving him of certain forms of recognition. It would seem advisable to draw on the concept of human emotions put forward originally by John Dewey in his pragmatic psychology in order to give this complex proposition at least the vestiges of plausibility.

In some of his early essays, Dewey argued that the widespread conception of human emotions as forms that lent expression to an inner state of mind [*Gemütszustand*] was wrong. He maintained that such a conception, one still to be encountered in the word of William James, inevitably misjudged the function of emotions with regard to action, for it always assumed that psychic activity was something 'inside' the actions that were aimed 'outwards'.<sup>13</sup> Dewey, by contrast, proceeds from the observation that emotions in the horizon of human experience depend either positively or negatively on the execution of actions. They either accompany the experience of particularly successful "communication" (with things or persons) in the form of corporeally-based excitement, or they arise as the experience of the repugnance felt in unsuccessful, disrupted attempts to execute an action. It is the analysis of such experi-

ences of repugnance which provides Dewey with the key with which to devise an action-theoretic conception of human emotions. This analysis reveals that negative feelings such as anger, indignation and sorrow comprise the affective response involved when the person concerned shifts his attention to focus on his own expectations at the moment when the further consequences planned for a completed action are not forthcoming. Positive feelings such as joy or pride are, by contrast, the subject's reaction to being freed suddenly from a burdensome state of excitement by having been able to find a suitable successful solution to a pressing action problem. Thus, Dewey regards feelings in principle as the affective reactions arising from the recoil of the success or failure of our practical intentions.

If we take this approach as the general starting point, then we can differentiate emotions still further, assuming that the types of "disruptions" which may in principle cause habitual human actions to fail can be distinguished from one another more closely. Given that such disruptions or failures are to be assessed against the background of the expectant attitudes which preceded the completion of the action, we can make an initial, rough division between two different types of expectations. Routine human actions can come up against obstacles either in the framework of expectations for instrumental success or in the context of expectations of normative conduct. Should success-oriented actions fail owing to their encountering unforeseen obstructions in the area in which the tasks have to be carried out, then this leads to "technical" disruptions in the widest sense of the word. Should, by contrast, actions that adhere to specific norms rebound in certain situations owing to a violation of the norms which are assumed to be valid, then this leads to "moral" conflicts in the social lifeworld. This second form of disruption in the completion of actions constitutes the horizon of experiences which serves as the practical location of human moral emotional reactions. The latter can be understood in Dewey's sense as those forms of emotional excitement which arise as the person's reaction to experiencing the unforeseen repulsion of his action as a consequence of a violation of normative behavioral expectations. The differences between the individual feelings can be measured quite simply in terms of whether the violation of a norm which hinders an action is caused by the subject himself or by the partner in interaction. In the former case, the repulsion of an action causes the person in experience a feeling of guilt and, in the latter, moral indignation. In both cases, however, what Dewey regarded as typical for such situations in which repulsed actions are experienced affectively holds true. For, by shifting one's attention to focus on one's own expectations, one becomes conscious also of the cognitive elements

of those expectations in this instance moral knowledge, elements of which informed the originally planned and now hindered action.

Shame is the most open of our moral feelings, to the extent that it does not refer simply to shyness at the exposure of the person's body, a shyness which evidently has deep anthropological roots. In the case of shame it is not clear from the outset which of the partners to interaction is responsible for violating the norm without which, as it were, the subject cannot routinely carry out his actions. The emotional contents of shame consist, as psychoanalytical and phenomenological approaches have together shown, of a form of lowering one's own feeling of self-esteem. The subject who is ashamed of himself when experiencing the repulsion of his action, experiences himself as possessing less social value than he previously believed. Psychoanalytically speaking, this means that the action-inhibiting violation of a moral norm has a negative impact not on the super-ego but rather on the subject's ego-ideals. 14 Such a form of shame is experienced only in the presence of a real or imaginary partner to interaction who is, as it were, accorded the role of witnessing the dashed ego-ideals. This type of shame can be caused by the person experiencing it or alternatively may be the consequence of external causes. In the former instance, the person experiences himself as inferior because he has violated a moral norm, adherence to which constituted a principle of his ego-ideals. In the latter case, by contrast, the person is oppressed by the feeling of lacking self-esteem because his partner in interaction violates moral norms, adherence to which had enabled him to count as the person which he desired to be in terms of his ego-ideals. In this context, the moral crisis in communication is triggered off by the fact that normative expectations are dashed, expectations which the active person believed he could have with regard to the interactive partner's willingness to respect him. To this extent, this second type of moral shame represents the emotional excitement that overcomes a person who is not able simply to continue with his action owing to his being confronted with disrespect for his ego-claims. And in this affective situation what the person experiences about himself is the constitutive dependence of his person on recognition by others.

In other words, a morality which attempts to bring the principles of mutual recognition to bear can find a weak empirical footing in the affective reaction of shame. For the cognitive conviction that the practical occurrence of disrespect inflicts damage on the intersubjective conditions of human socialization always emerges in such principles. The principles of a morality construed in terms of a theory of recognition only have a meagre chance of being realized in the social lifeworld to the extent that human subjects are incapable of reacting with neutral

feelings to social injury, such as physical abuse, underprivileging and degradation. For any negative emotional reactions elicited by the experience of disregard for claims to recognition contain in themselves the possibility that the affected subject may acquire a cognitive grasp of the injustice he has suffered.

To this extent, the feelings of moral indignation with which human beings react to insult and disrespect contain within themselves the potential for an idealizing anticipation of the conditions for successful, undistorted recognition. The admitted weakness of this practical pillar of morality within societal reality is evidenced by the fact that these emotional reactions do not necessarily disclose the injustice which disrespect entails, but only bear the potential for doing so. Whether the cognitive potential inherent in the feelings of social shame and offence evolves into a moral conviction depends largely on the form that the political and cultural environment of the subjects in question takes. If the experience of disrespect is to become a source of motivation for acts of political resistance, then there must exist a social movement by means of which it can be articulated and thus manifest itself in positive form. Once the emotionally fired condemnation of disrespect and insult takes the shape of a social struggle, however, it represents an empirical interest which corresponds to the theoretical concerns of morality. A concept of morality based on the theory of recognition would rely, therefore, on the support of historical and sociological studies which are capable of showing that moral progress is born of the struggle for recognition.



# Chapter 16

## Decentered Autonomy: The Subject after the Fall

It was two major intellectual currents which led in our century to a far-reaching crisis in the classical concept of the human subject; though both began critically with the consciousness-theoretic notion of individual autonomy, they did so from very different perspectives and with diverse objectives. 1 The first intellectual current, which is primarily associated with Freud's discoveries but also has precursors in early German romanticism and in Nietzsche, advances a psychological critique of the subject: by pointing to the consciousness-eluding, unconscious driving forces and motives of individual action, it demonstrates that the human subject cannot be transparent to herself in the manner claimed in the classical notion of autonomy. This critique doubts with empirical reason the possibility of the complete transparency of human action and thereby invalidates the idea of autonomy in the sense of the controllability of our own doing. The second intellectual current, which is associated with the investigations of the later Wittgenstein, on the one hand, and with those of Saussure, on the other, advances a language-philosophical critique of the subject: by pointing to the dependence of individual speech on a pre-given system of linguistic meanings, it shows that the human subject cannot constitute or exhaust meaning in the manner presumed primarily in

transcendental philosophy. Here, then, the possibility of the individual constitution of meaning is called into question by arguments from the philosophy of language, and the idea of autonomy in the sense of the authorship of the subject is thereby invalidated.

Thus, in these two intellectual currents, the classical notion of subjectivity, which was normatively tied to the idea of individual self-determination, is destroyed from two sides: while the psychological critique discovers libidinal forces within the subject as something foreign but necessary for her, the language-philosophical deconstruction of subjectivity is concerned with uncovering the actuality of linguistic systems of meaning, an actuality which precedes all intentionality; both dimensions, the unconscious as well as language, refer to powers or forces which are operative in every individual action without the subject ever being able to control them completely or even detect them. This conclusion, however annoying it might be for the subject's narcissism, is largely accepted in philosophy today; indeed, it has even been extended and deepened somewhat in the last two decades, for the research work of Lévi-Strauss or Foucault, for instance, can be grasped as nothing other than further steps in the discovery of powers foreign to or going beyond the subject. But if all this is meanwhile undisputable, if the results of this now century-long critique of the classical notion of autonomy have already become self-evident for all of us, then the question concerning the crisis of the subject can no longer mean today the one concerning the value or lack of value of these kinds of decentering; rather, the philosophically decisive problem is what further conclusions have to be drawn from the fact that the human subject is no longer to be grasped as one completely transparent to herself or as a being in command of herself. I want to sketch three possible responses, ones actually argued today, in order to demarcate the ground on which the following reflections are based.

- (a) The first response consists in radicalizing the decentering tendencies which are already present in the above-sketched intellectual currents: those powers foreign to the subject which psychoanalysis and the philosophy of language discovered are objectivated into anonymous forces to such a degree that, in the end, they have to appear in principle as the other of the subject. <sup>2</sup> This position, adopted today by poststructuralism, necessitates abandoning the idea of individual autonomy because one can no longer simply state in what way the subject is to attain a higher degree of self-determination or transparency.
- (b) The second response consists in adamantly retaining the classical ideal of autonomy while at the same time, that is, paradoxically, recognizing the results of those decentering processes: as in Kant's two-world doctrine, the subject-transcending powers of the unconscious or

language are accepted as components of the empirical world of subjects, but unaffected by this the notion of individual autonomy is retained as a transcendental idea of the human species; this position, which manifest itself today as a countermovement to poststructuralism, leads to a splitting of the idea and reality of the human subject, and this causes the concept of individual autonomy to become increasingly illusory. 3

- (c) Finally, the third response consists in a reconstruction of subjectivity that is designed so as to include from the outset those subject-transcending powers as constitutive conditions for the individualization of subjects: the personal freedom or self-determination of individuals is understood here in such a manner that it appears not in opposition to, but as a particular organizational form of the contingent forces which elude all individual control. I consider the development of a concept of the subject based on a theory of intersubjectivity to be the most promising path for such a position, that is, one which attempts to adapt the idea of individual autonomy to the limiting conditions of the unconscious and language.

In what follows I want to sketch roughly how a concept of individual autonomy has to be constituted so that it can do justice to the insights of the modern critique of the subject by comprehending the human person in terms of a theory of intersubjectivity; progressing along this path, it ought to become clear that decentering the subject does not lead to abandoning the idea of autonomy, but rather that this idea itself must be decentered. I shall proceed by first distinguishing three elements of meaning in the Kantian concept of autonomy in order to isolate the dimension which is of sole relevance to our question (I). In a second step I shall briefly elaborate on how an intersubjectivity-theoretic model of the human subject must appear if it is to comprehend the decentering forces of the unconscious and language not as barriers to, but as constitutive conditions of the individualization of the subject (II). Finally, in a third step I would like to indicate what consequences follow from this intersubjectivity-theoretic decentering of the subject for our notion of individual autonomy; here, it will be a matter of weakening and reformulating the idea of self-determination at three successively demanding levels, and of doing so in such a way that this idea can be retained as a normative guide without slipping into the danger of being idealized (III).

I

In the normative idea of individual autonomy, as it has been developed with Kant's practical philosophy in European intellectual his-

tory, there has been multiple layers of meaning right from the beginning; depending on whether it was in the context of jurisprudence, moral philosophy, or social psychology, something different was intended by the normative idea that the chances for autonomous action of subjects have to be disseminated or increased. If today, under conditions more difficult for theory formation, one is to connect up with this idea once again, then it has to be clarified from the outset in what respect we speak of the individual autonomy of the human subject. Following Thomas E. Hill I would like to distinguish three layers of meaning in the concept, which, though all of them have roots in Kant, point in completely different directions; 4 in order of succession, the three meanings were formed in the contexts of moral philosophy, jurisprudence, and a philosophical theory of the person; and only the last of these meanings plays a part in the discussion which, in the wake of the modern critique of the subject, relates to the normative idea of individual autonomy.

- (a) In the context of moral philosophy, we speak of individual autonomy primarily in the meaning ascribed to it by Kant in his practical philosophy: the human will is "autonomous" here if it is able to pass a moral judgment which is distinguished by the fact that it takes its orientation from rational principles and thereby disregards personal inclinations. If one views this formulation more closely, it will soon become evident that "autonomy" in Kant's philosophy means initially only the properties of human persons insofar as they find themselves in the situation of justifying moral judgments: for it is only then that the individual subject has to learn to abstract from her personal inclinations and preferences in order to be able to reach a judgment that impartially considers the concerns of all those morally affected. For this reason, it can be said that what Kant meant by the term individual autonomy was not the ideal properties of concrete persons, indeed, perhaps not even specific properties of morally judging persons; rather, he essentially wanted to describe the properties of judgments to which the predicate "moral" is to be ascribed. Such judgments are characterized by the fact that they are passed in autonomy, that is, impartially in the sense of being detached from all empirical causality through inclinations and being oriented solely by rational principles. With regard to the debate being conducted today in the sphere of the modern critique of the subject, this first meaning of autonomy becomes a problem as soon as it is projected as a normative ideal onto the life of human persons as a whole; for it is then that the misleading and distorted notion arises, as is not infrequently the case in Kant, that the subject who knows how to raise herself "rationally" above all her concrete inclinations and needs is especially autonomous.

- (b) In our ordinary language, a second meaning of the concept manifests itself every time we say that the individual autonomy of a person has been violated by a certain mode of action. Here, the term does not describe the ideal properties of a moral actor or moral judgment; rather, it lends expression to the moral or legal rights to which all responsible persons ought to be entitled. Autonomy in this sense means a right to self-determination which is guaranteed to human subjects insofar as they can be obstructed in their individual decision making by either physical or psychical influences. However complex the problems associated with the realization of such a right to individual autonomy might be, however, they do not touch in any way the questions which arise in the wake of the modern critique of the subject; for how the subjects' control of themselves is assessed in detail has no influence on the notion, which has become self-evident since Kant, that all of them are morally entitled to the same right to individual self-determination.
- (c) It is only with the third use of the concept of individual autonomy that we reach that particular layer of meaning for which the modern critique of the subject actually represents a critical challenge: by "autonomy" we can after all refer, in a normative sense, to the empirical ability of concrete subjects to determine their lives in toto freely and without constraint. This type of individual autonomy is not something to which the human being could have a right in any kind of way; rather, it is a matter of a degree of psychical maturity which allows subjects to organize their lives as unique biographies that take into consideration their individual inclinations and needs. Such a formulation already makes it clear that, by the notion of individual autonomy here, two abilities or properties are distinguished whose very possibility the modern critique of the subject attempts to challenge in a certain way: for to be able to organize her own life freely and without constraint, the individual subject must, according to classical conceptions, possess both a particular awareness of her personal needs and a specific knowledge about the meaning attributed to her actions. Thus, two qualities of human action are presupposed: need transparency and meaning intentionality, whose attainability can no longer be readily claimed as a consequence of the modern critique of the subject. That is why, today, it is this third meaning of individual autonomy which requires theoretical correction or revision if it is still to be regarded as a normative ideal; the personal abilities necessarily distinguished by the idea of personal autonomy in the sense of unconstrained self-determination have to be formulated theoretically in such a way that, in view of the modern decentering of the subject, they do not appear as excessive demands upon human beings. I wish to prepare the way for such a decentering of the subject by first pre-

sentencing a model of the person based on a theory of intersubjectivity; within this framework, the psychical presuppositions of personal autonomy can then be gradually reformulated in such a way that they cannot be criticized for their idealism by psychoanalysis or language theory.

## II

The conception of the human subject, which I believe allows the formulation of a meaningful concept of personal autonomy today, is to be found in a particular theory of intersubjectivity; here, insight into the intersubjective constitution of ego identity is coupled with the knowledge that some of the forces and motives which constitute the subject's potential psychical drive always remain concealed from her conscious experiencing. In my view, the starting point for such a conception, in which the human subject is cognized as the product of processes of social interaction without denying the existence of unconscious spontaneity, can be located in such diverse theories as, for instance, G. H. Mead's social psychology or Donald W. Winnicott's psychoanalysis; in both, one can find the first outlines of a position which allows the uncontrollable powers of language and the unconscious to be grasped not as the limitation of, but as the enabling condition for the acquisition of personal autonomy. <sup>5</sup> Of course, such a perspective requires that all the concepts of the classical theory of consciousness be transformed in terms of a psychoanalytically extended theory of intersubjectivity; I can do this here only with a few keywords, which hopefully will be sufficient to allow the basic determinate idea to emerge.<sup>6</sup>

For Mead, there is no doubt that the individual subject can attain a conscious identity only by putting herself in the external perspective of the symbolically represented other, from where she learns to view herself and her action as being a participant in interaction: the concept of the "me," which represents the image I have of myself from the viewpoint of my partners in communication, is to make it terminologically clear that the individual can bring herself to consciousness only in the objective attitude. The concrete other of infant interaction evaporates in the process of growing up into the intersubjectively shared language system in which the dialogical perspectives have assumed the objective form of always open, linguistically represented meanings through which I learn to experience myself and my environment: what is given to me as consciousness of reality does not therefore follow from the individual constitution of meaning, but from active participation in a transcending language event [*Sprachgeschehen*], which cannot be con-

trolled intentionally from any central point. However, as Mead sees it, this conscious part of conducting my life cannot in principle include that part of all subjectivity which he surprisingly refers to as the "I"; what is meant by this, and it is hardly different from the "unconscious" in psychoanalysis, is the agency in the human personality which is responsible for all impulsive and creative reactions and which, as such, is never able to reach the horizons of consciousness. Mead, like Winnicott, explicitly leaves open the scope and contents of this unconscious reservoir of action impulses: the concept of the "I" refers, almost in the sense of early romanticism, only to the sudden experience of a surge of inner impulses, whereby it has to remain unclear whether they spring from presocial drives, the creative imagination, or from the moral sensitivity of one's own self. But as with Winnicott, it is from this unconscious that those psychical energies continuously flow which equip every subject with a multitude of unused possibilities for identity.

Thus, in its spontaneous activity, this "I" or this subconscious not only precedes the consciousness which the subject has of her linguistically represented partners in interaction, it also continuously relates back, as if by way of commentary, to the expressions of action consciously held in the "me." Between the "I" and the "me" or between the unconscious and the conscious in the individual personality, there is a tense relationship comparable to the one between two unequal partners in dialogue: without being articulated, the unconscious action impulses accompany all our conscious conduct in life by, as it were, affectively commentating, in the form of feelings of approval or disapproval, the current modes of behavior. It is from this interplay of unconscious surge and conscious, linguistically mediated experience that there develops in every subject the tension which drives her into a process of individualization; for in order to do justice to the affectively represented demands of her unconscious, the subject has to try, with the forces of consciousness, to expand her social latitude for action in such a way that she can present herself intersubjectively as a unique personality. Here I do not wish to consider further the theoretical implications which follow from this theoretic conception of the intersubjective genesis of the moral person; what plays a major part for Mead in this is that the self can individuate itself in accordance with its inner action impulses only if, in the course of idealization, it can always be sure of the recognition of an extended communication community. In the concluding section I shall attempt instead to sketch those theoretical consequences for the normative ideal of personal autonomy which can be drawn from psychoanalytically extended conceptions of intersubjectivity.

### III

In the model of personality which I have briefly outlined, the uncontrollable forces of the unconscious and of the linguistic meaning event [*Bedeutungsgeschehen*] are grasped as those two poles in the subject from whose charged opposition the compulsion to individualize emerges in the first place; for this reason, the two powers which elude conscious control represent not as the modern critique of the subject frequently views them the deep-rooted barriers to, but the constitutive conditions of the development of ego identity. Of course, this thesis can be made plausible only if, as a theoretical continuation of the model sketched, we can outline a concept of personal autonomy which is to serve as the normative objective of such a process of individualization. In what follows I wish to attempt this by sequentially introducing the abilities and properties which we have to coherently theorize in order to reach the already developed idea of personal autonomy; here it will be seen that a psychoanalytically extended conception of intersubjectivity forces us to replace the classical descriptions of such properties by weaker, as it were, decentered notions. The corresponding properties can be meaningfully dealt with in a series that successively comprises the dimensions of the individual relation to inner nature, to one's own life in toto, and, finally, to the social world; thus, unconstrained and free self-determination, as we think of it in the concept of personal autonomy, requires specific abilities in relation to drives, to the organization of one's own life, and to the moral demands of the social environment. If we take the model of personality outlined above as our basis, then, in contrast to the classical ideal of autonomy, a systematic weakening has to follow on all three levels: the classical goal of need transparency, I would like to claim, must be replaced by the notion of the ability to articulate needs through language; the idea of biographical consistency should be replaced by the notion of a narrative coherence of life; and, finally, the idea of a principled orientation has to be supplemented by the criterion of moral sensitivity to context. I wish to elaborate briefly what I understand by these replacements and supplements; in doing so, it will become evident that, as a further consequence of the approach developed, these three abilities can be acquired only by way of the experience of recognition.

- (a) The idea of a complete transparency of our needs and drives constitutes an elementary component of the classical notion of personal autonomy: knowledge of all the motives for action which could influence us when making important decisions was considered a presupposition for the autonomous determination of one's own life. Where,



under the influence of psychoanalysis, the ideal of a permanent transparency already had to be regarded as an illusion, it was replaced by the notion of a progressive linguistification of the unconscious; then, only that person who succeeded in completely rendering the hitherto unconscious parts of her needs into language could be considered autonomous in the strict sense. By acknowledging a reservoir of creative impulses which, structurally, remain outside the control of consciousness, such ideals of autonomy lost their theoretical foundation; their place has to be taken by the notion of an ability to articulate, without fear, action impulses which tenaciously and silently secure expression in the daily conduct of life. The creative, but never-to-be-completed disclosure of the unconscious along the linguistic traces pointed out by our affective reactions is the goal which the ideal of a decentered autonomy has in respect of the relation to inner nature: a person who is autonomous in this sense is not only free from psychical motives which unconsciously tie her to rigid, compulsive behavioral reactions, but is also in a position to discover new, still undisclosed action impulses in herself and to make reflective decisions about the matter. 7 Such a faculty for the unconstrained articulation of needs is independent on support from the intersubjective world in two respects: first, as Winnicott has shown, the subject can creatively concentrate on the surge of her inner impulses only if she is so sure of the permanence of the care shown by concrete others that she can be alone with herself without fear; 8 and, secondly, the individual articulation of needs is dependent on the scope of an intersubjective language which, by reason of the impact of poetic innovations, has become and remains so differentiated and so open to experience that hitherto inarticulate action impulses can be lent expression as precisely as possible in this language. 9

(b) With regard to the second level of our distinction, we are concerned with how the various action impulses can be integrated by the subject into the conduct of her life in such a way that this life as a whole merits the predicate "autonomous." Constituting a central component of the classical idea of leading an autonomous life is the notion of being able, in the course of a single biography, to bring the diverse claims of needs into a rational scheme of super- and subordination: a presupposition for personal autonomy was considered to be the ability to organize the outwardly surging impulses and motives within a single relation of value and meaning in such a way that they can become elements of a linearly drafted life plan. With the notion of a multitude of unused possibilities for identity, which every subject has to make present to herself in a self-relationship without fear, such an ideal of autonomy also lost its theoretical foundation. If it is not to be ruled out for

human subjects that they can discover new, divergent action impulses in themselves at any time, the notion of a reflective subordination of one's own life to a single relation of meaning is untenable; its place has to be taken by the idea of being able to present one's life as a coherent context in such a way that its disparate parts appear as an expression of the position reflectively taken by one and the same person. Such a level of reflection is tied to the ability to justify one's own decisions about life from the metaperspective of evaluating wishes and action impulses: it is only when I am able to view and organize my primary needs again in the light of ethical values that it can be claimed that I am capable of autonomously—that is, reflectively—taking a position on my life. The ability to lead my life autonomously is then evidenced in the property of being able to present one's life as a narrative context that emerges from such "metawishes" or ethical valuations; however, what is meant by this is not in MacIntyre's sense that all biographical phases can be retrospectively narrated as steps to the realization of a single end in life; <sup>10</sup> this normative standard is to be understood only in the sense of the ability to present the various phases of life as links in a chain of strong valuations.<sup>11</sup> In so weak a sense, however, both the die-hard hedonist and the reflective criminal are examples of autonomous personalities, for the criterion states nothing about the content of the strong valuations which stamp each of the various phases of life. This makes it clear that here we are speaking of personal autonomy without any reference to the moral demands of the social environment. It is only at the third level that what we mean by personal autonomy from a moral point of view comes into play when we think not of the properties of merely a judging person, but of a person in the entirety of the conduct of her life.

- (c) It is part of the intellectual heritage of romantic individualism that a person is considered "autonomous" when she can reflectively put her life in the service of the radical fulfilment of her own drives without showing any kind of moral consideration for her partners in interaction. Of course, in view of those models for leading one's life autonomously as they are represented, for instance, by the conscious hedonist, the obvious question immediately arises whether the degree of moral isolation does not also leave negative traces in the individual self-relationship; it is to be surmised that each member of our society is equipped with a rudimentary, however internalized, superego, the perpetual violation of which must lead to moral feelings of guilt and thereby to secondary compulsive mechanisms.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, it seems plausible to include among the properties of an autonomous person at the third level the ability to relate, in a reflective manner, to the moral demands of one's own social environment. What, at this level, has constituted a part of the

classical ideal of autonomy since Kant is the notion of being oriented by moral principles: the person considered morally autonomous was the one who allowed her action to be guided by rational, that is, universalizable, principles in such a way that she is not driven to unjust or partial decisions by personal inclinations or concrete ties. But the better subjects learn to become familiar with a multitude of unused possibilities for identity in themselves, the more aware they will become of the concrete predicaments and neediness which other subjects have to struggle with in their lives. That is why the normative idea of the creative articulation of needs requires an expansion of the ideal of moral autonomy by the dimension of a practically effective sensitivity to context. It is no longer possible to consider simply that person morally autonomous who is strictly oriented by universalist principles in her communicative action; rather, a person is to be regarded morally autonomous only if she knows how to responsibly apply these principles with affective sympathy for and sensitivity to the concrete circumstances of the individual case. 13 Just as insight into the fact that the unconscious is in principle uncontrollable necessitated a reformulation of the idea of autonomously leading one's life, it also requires a new determination of the moral autonomy of persons: it is the affective understanding for the fact that other subjects can in turn be confronted by the unexpected possibilities of their own selves and thus have to cope with difficult problems of decision, and primarily this understanding, which gives the principled orientation the degree of context sensitivity which distinguishes a person as being morally autonomous today.

It is the three abilities thus outlined that, taken together, theoretically determine how a normative idea of individual autonomy can still be sustained even after the sobering objections raised by the modern critique of the subject: it is only that person who is in a position to disclose needs creatively, to present her entire life in an ethically reflected way, and to apply universalist norms in a context-sensitive manner, who can be regarded as an autonomous person under conditions in which the psyche is in principle not at the disposal of the self. This does not however mean to say that there is a relation of sequential harmony or even enrichment between these three axes of individual autonomy: the different abilities are not necessarily founded on one another, rather they can pressure or be in conflict with each other indeed, it may well be typical of our epoch that, in the individual interest in personal autonomy, only one of these abilities is cultivated at the expense of the other two, and this we can then designate one-sided autonomy. This thus leads to the theoretical conclusion that one can speak of the individual autonomy of a person in the complete sense of the term only if these three abilities are to be found in her.14

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

### Author's Introduction

1. See Barrington Moore, *Injustice. The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharp, 1978), as well as Richard Senett and Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Knopf, 1972).
2. Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), chaps. 13; English translation in press (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).
3. Jürgen Habermas, "A Reply to my Critics," in John B. Thompson and David Held (eds.), *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 219-283, note 14.
4. See, for example, the contributions by Friedrich Kambartel and Susan Miller Okin in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 2 (1993), pp. 237 ff.
5. See Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., Thomas McCarthy, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 and 1987), vol. II, chap. VIII.
6. For a comparable division of social pathologies, see now Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), chap. 1.
7. See Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung*, chap. 9.
8. See Axel Honneth, *Desintegration. Bruchstücke einer soziologischen zeitdiagnose*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994).
9. For a recent summary see Rainer Forst, "Kommunitarismus und Liberalismus Stationen einer Debatte", in Axel Honneth (ed.), *Kommunitarismus*.

*Eine Debatte über die moralischen Grundlagen moderner Gesellschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993).

10. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*; see also Holmer Steinfarth, "Authentizität und Anerkennung. Zu Charles Taylors neuen Büchern *The Ethics of Authenticity* and *The Politics of Recognition*", in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 3 (1993).

11. Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung*, chap. 4.

## Chapter 1

1. Cf. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Greenwood, 1982), chap. 2.

2. Niklas Luhmann, "Kapital und Arbeit, Probleme einer Unterscheidung," in Johannes Berger (ed.), *Die Moderne Kontinuitäten und Zäsuren, Soziale Welt*, Sonderband 4 (Göttingen: 1986), p. 57ff.

3. Cf. Ernst Nolte, *Marxismus und industrielle Revolution* (Stuttgart: 1983).

4. Cf. Klaus Eder, "A New Social Movement?," *Telos*, No. 52 (1982), p. 5ff.; see also Alain Touraine, *Le voix et le regard* (Paris: 1978).

5. Cf. Otto Kallscheuer, *Marxismus und Erkenntnistheorie. Eine politische Philosophiegeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: 1986); Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality* (Oxford: 1984).

6. Cf., among others, G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford: 1978); for an excellent discussion of this influential book see Anton Leist, "G. A. Cohens materialistische Geschichtstheorie: Einige Einwände. Überblick zu einer Diskussion," *Analyse und Kritik*, 4 (1982), p. 131ff.

7. See Tom Long, "Marx and Western Materialism in the 1970s," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. XXV (1980), p. 13ff. However, one must also take counter-trends into account, such as the return of Marxism in American sociology; see on this point Michael Burawoy, "Introduction: The Resurgence of Marxism in American Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 88 (1982), p. 1ff.; for an interesting overview of the debate on Marxism in the last few years see also Ernst Nolte, "Marx und Marxismus in den USA, Großbritannien und Frankreich 1980/1984," *Neue politische Literatur*, 1 (1985), p. 5ff.

8. Cf. Johann Arnason, "The Crisis of Marxism," *Thesis Eleven*, 1 (1980); and his "Reconstruction, Deconstruction: Habermas and Giddens on Marx," *Thesis Eleven*, 9 (1985).

9. This is also the problem homed in on by those authors that have attempted to expand or reconstruct Marx's class theory by means of the Weberian class model; compare for example Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory*:

*A Bourgeois Critique* (New York: 1979); Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (London: 1981).

10. On this point see, for example, Jean Cohen, *Class and Civil Society. The Limits of Marxian Critical Theory* (Amherst: 1982), part I.

11. Adam Przeworski, "Methodologischer Individualismus als Herausforderung der marxistischen Theorie," *Prokla*, 62 (1986), p. 120ff.; Jon Elster, "Marxism, Functionalism, and Game Theory: The Case for Methodological Individualism," *Theory and Society*, 11 (1982), p. 453ff. For an overview of this game-theoretical approach see Scott Lash and John Urry, "The New Marxism of Collective Action: A Critical Analysis," *Sociology*, 18 (1984), p. 33ff.

12. Cf., for example, Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: 1985).

13. For example, Anund Haga, "Interaktion und Intentionalität. Bemerkungen zum Versuch, die Sozialwissenschaften spiel- und entscheidungs-theoretisch zu rekonstruieren," in Dieter Böhler et. al. (eds.), *Die pragmatische Wende* (Frankfurt am Main: 1987), p. 91 ff.

14. On the theoretical history that led up to this approach, cf. Lesley Johnson, *The Cultural Critics. From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams* (London: 1979). On the one hand, E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: 1968) and, on the other, Raymond William's *Culture and Society 1780/1950* (London: 1958) were of paradigmatic importance for this approach. For a good overview of contemporary debates in England, see Stuart Hall "Cultural Studies and the Centre: some problematics and problems" in Stuart Hall, et al (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language* (London: 1980), p. 15ff.

15. See, among others, David Lockwood, "The Weakest Link in the Chain? Some Comments on the Marxist Theory of Action," *Research in the Sociology of Work*, 1 (1981), p. 435ff.

16. Among others, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Theoretical Logic in Sociology* (London: 1982), vol. II, chaps. 3 and 6.

17. Cf. E. P. Thompson's collection of essays *Plebische Kultur und moralische Ökonomie* (Frankfurt am Main Berlin: 1980).

18. Exemplary cases are E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*; his "Die 'Sittliche Ökonomie' der englischen Unterschichten im 18. Jahrhundert," in D. Puls et. al., *Wahrnehmungsformen und Protestverhalten* (Frankfurt am Main: 1979), p. 13ff.; Birgit Mahnkopf, *Verbürgerlichung. Die Legende vom Ende des Proletariats* (Frankfurt am Main: 1985).

19. Cf., for example, Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2 (Boston: 1987), p. 374ff.; A. Giddens, "Out of the Orrery: E. P. Thompson on consciousness and history," in his *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Oxford:



1987), p. 203ff.; A. Giddens, "Literature and Society: Raymond Williams," in his *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory* (London and Basingstoke: 1982), p. 133ff.

20. Cf. Barry Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique* (London: 1983), chap 1.

21. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in his *Essays on Ideology* (London: 1983).

22. Nicos Poulantzas' *State, Power, Socialism* (London: 1978) is a paradigmatic example of this.

23. Cf. B. Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 53f.; cf. also Stefan Breuer, "Foucaults Theorie der Disziplinärgesellschaft," in *Leviathan*, 3 (1987), p. 319ff.

24. Axel Honneth, *A Critique of Power* (Cambridge: 1990), chaps. 5 and 6; J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: 1987), chap. 10.

25. Cf. A. Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action," in this volume.

26. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: 1975), part 1; Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London & New York: 1976).

27. Cf. Ernst Michael Lange, *Das Prinzip Arbeit* (Frankfurt am M, Berlin, Vienna: 1980), p. 24ff; Manfred Riedel, "Hegel und Marx. Die Neubestimmung des Verhältnisses von Theorie und Praxis," in his *System und Geschichte* (Frankfurt am M: 1973), p. 9ff.

28. Cf. A. Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action"; Georg Lohmann, "Gesellschaftskritik und normativer Maßstab," in A. Honneth & U. Jaeggi, *op. cit.*, p. 234ff.

29. Cf. J. C. Alexander, *op.cit.*, p. 75ff.

30. Cf. Claus Offe, "Arbeit als soziologische Schlüsselkategorie?" in his "Arbeitergesellschaft." *Strukturprobleme und Zukunftsperspektiven* (Frankfurt am M: 1984), p. 13ff.

31. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Joseph Bien, trans., (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993); Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Kathleen Blavney, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), part 1; J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (London: 1978).

32. Cf. Thomas Meyer, *Der Zwiespalt in der Marxschen Emanzipationstheorie* (Kronberg/Ts.: 1973); Andreas Wildt, "Produktivkräfte und soziale Umwälzung," in A. Honneth & U. Jaeggi, *op. cit.*, p. 206ff.

33. Cf., for example Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); and, on Braverman, A. Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action."

34. György Márkus, "Die Welt menschlicher Objekte. Zum Problem der Konstitution im Marxismus," in A. Honneth & U. Jaeggi, *op. cit.*, p. 12ff.

35. George G. Brenkert, *Marx's Ethics of Freedom* (London: 1983), part 2; Otto Kallscheuer, "Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit bei Marx," *Prokla*, 65 (1986), p. 121ff.

36. Cf. the extremely exact reconstruction of this position in A. Wildt, *die Anthropologie des frühen Marx* (Hagen: Studien-brief Fren-Universität Hagen: 1987).

37. I restrict myself here to the bare bibliographical minimum: as a summary of the viewpoint of a theory of socialization, cf. J. Habermas, "Stichworte zur Theorie des Sozialisation" in his *Kultur und Kritik* (Frankfurt am M: 1973), p. 118ff; from a philosophical viewpoint, cf. A. Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung* (Stuttgart: 1982), p. 259ff.

38. Cf. for an exemplary model of this, Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt* (London: 1979).

## Chapter 2

1. Translator's note: The word *Arbeit* may be translated as "labor", as it generally was in Marx's time, or "work", as is more often the case today. In this essay, the latter translation will be the usual one, especially when concrete, practical work in the world is meant. In certain cases, however, the former translation will be used, for example "labor theory of value" for *Arbeitswertlehre* and "social labor" for *gesellschaftliche Arbeit*.

Quotations from the works of Hannah Arendt, Harry Braverman and Jürgen Habermas cited here have all been taken from the Americal originals or, in the case of Habermas, from the American translation. In all other cases, citations have been taken and quotations translated from the German-language editions cited by the author.

2. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Jeremy Shapiro, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chap. 1, and Albrecht Wellmer, "Communication and Emancipation: Reflections on the 'Linguistic Turn' in Critical Social Theory," in John O'Neill (Ed.), *On Critical Theory* (New York: University Press of America, 1989), pp. 231263.

3. See in particular Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, Ben Brewster, trans. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).

4. Cf. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology*, Martin Sohn-Rethel, trans. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978).

5. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, *op. cit.*; see also Karl-Otto Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), vol. 2.

6. Hans-Jürgen Krahel, "Produktion und Klassenkampf," in *Konstitution und Klassenkampf* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), pp. 387 ff.



7. For the history of this concept, see especially Werner Conze, "Arbeit," in *Lexikon der politisch-sozialen Begriffe der Neuzeit*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1982), pp. 154 ff.; and Manfred Riedel, "Arbeit," in *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1 (München, 1973), pp. 125 ff.

8. See Manfred Riedel, "Hegel und Marx. Die Neubestimmung des Verhältnisses von Theorie und Praxis," in *System und Geschichte. Studien zum historischen Standort von Hegels Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 9 ff., and Karl Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche*, 7th ed. (Hamburg, 1978), pp. 286 ff.

9. In addition to the works of Riedel and Löwith cited above, see also R. N. Berki, "On the Nature and Origins of Marx's Concept of Labor," *Political Theory* 7(1), 1979, pp. 35 ff.

10. This is the thesis of Ernst Michael Lange's *Habilitationsschrift, Arbeit-Entäußerung-Entfremdung* (Ms., 1978). See also Lange's "Wertformanalyse, Geldkritik und the Konstruktion des Fetischismus bei Marx," *Neue Heft für Philosophie* 13, 1978, pp. 1 ff.

11. Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuebach*, in *Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), vol. 5, pp. 311.

12. See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, chap. 1, and "Work and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena Philosophy" in *Theory and Practice*; Albrecht Wellmer, *Critical Theory of Society*, John Cumming, trans. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), chap. 2; Rüdiger Bubner, *Handlung, Sprache und Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp. 74 ff.

13. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), volume 3, pp. 229348.; see also Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology, Collected Works*, vol. 5, pp. 19539.

14. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 342.

15. Thomas Meyer, *Der Zweispalt in der Marx'schen Emanzipationstheorie* (Kronberg/Ts., 1973), p. 174 ff.

16. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (rough draft), Martin Nicolaus, trans. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 611612; see also pp. 497498 and 692693 for contrasting images of machine production. See additionally Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, Ben Fowkes, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), pp. 461469 and pp. 544552.

17. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 297. See also pp. 692693, and pp. 106107. On Marx's concept of 'abstract labor', see the clear and concise presentation by Hartmut Neuendorff, *Der Begriff des Interesses* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 130 ff.

18. On this see Michael Theunissen, "Krise der Macht. Thesen zur Theorie des dialektischen Widerspruchs," in W. R. Beyer (ed.) *Zur Logischen Struktur des Kapitalbegriffs bei Karl Marx* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970). See also the essay by Georg Lohmann, "Gesellschaftskritik und normativer Maßstab," in Axel Honneth and Urs Jaeggi (eds.) *Arbeit, Handlung und Normativität*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp. 234-299.

19. *Capital*, vol. I, p. 929.

20. See for example Wolf Wagner, *Verelendungstheorie die hilflose Kapitalismuskritik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1976).

21. See Andreas Wildt, *Produktivkräfte und soziale Umwälzung*, pp. 211 ff.

22. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), part II. I have gained important insights from Braverman's investigation, though its sections on macroeconomics in particular, which are based upon the work of Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, have come under attack. See, for example, Rod Coombs, "Labor and Monopoly Capital," *New Left Review*, 107 (1978), pp. 79 ff. I have also benefitted from the work of Georges Friedmann, *Problemes Humains du Machinisme Industriel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946); see in particular the Introduction.

23. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, p. 113.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

25. Friedrich Gerstenberger has shown this for the development of qualification requirements in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1950 in his critique of the thesis of increasing qualification, "Produktion und Qualifikation," *Leviathan* 3(2), 1975, pp. 121 ff.

26. Christian von Ferber, *Arbeitsfreude. Wirklichkeit und Ideologie* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1959), p. 16.

27. *Ibid.*, Chap. 2, § 5; a concrete example is provided by Hans Freyer, *Theorie des Gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1955), chap. 1.

28. On this subject in general see the outstanding study by Gert Schmidt *Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung und Industriosozologie in den USA* (Frankfurt am Main/Köln, 1974).

29. Gert Schmidt utilized this term for the process by which industrial sociology, embedded in the advancing cycle of rationalization in the capitalist system of production, constantly encountered new dimensions of the work process which were 'capable of rationalization'. See *Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung und Industriosozologie*, p. 92.

30. See, for example, the work of Friedmann, Goldthorpe and Touraine.

31. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, 1958).

32. Max Scheler, "Arbeit and Ethik," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1 (*Frühe Schriften*), pp. 161 ff. The essay by J. P. Meyer, "Das Problem der Arbeit in der deutschen Philosophie der Gegenwart" (in *Die Arbeit* 8, 1931, pp. 128 ff.), represents for both historical and theoretical reasons a very interesting marxist discussion of the concept of work found in the work of Scheler and Heidegger.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

35. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 136.

36. Cf. also Rüdiger Bubner, *Handlung, Sprache und Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), chapter 2, section 1.

37. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 176.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

39. Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness*, Rodney Livingstone, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 83222.

40. I mean in particular the following essays by Herbert Marcuse: "Über die philosophischen Grundlagen des wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Arbeitsbegriffs," in *Schriften*, vol. I, pp. 556 ff., and "The Concept of Essence," in Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, Jeremy Shapiro, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 4387. Marcuse later distanced himself from the social-philosophical concept of work found in these essays. This shift is marked in his writings by his systematic consideration of the empirical rationalization of work relations according to Taylor's principles in "Einige gesellschaftliche Folgen moderner Technologie," in *Schriften*, vol. 3, pp. 286 ff.

41. On this see Jóhann Arnason's critique in *Von Marcuse zu Marx* (Neuwied und Berlin, 1971), chapters 1 and 2 in particular.

42. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, Annette Michelson, trans. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 198256.

43. See Winfried Dallmayr, "Phänomenologie und Marxismus in geschichtlicher Perspektive," in Bernhard Waldenfels, et al., *Phänomenologie und Marxismus* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin and Wien, 1977), pp. 13 ff., especially pp. 25 ff.

44. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Materialismus und Revolution", pp. 237238. In one of his essays, Leo Kofler incorporated this social-philosophical conception of Sartre's in connection with Lukács' work, moreover into a sociological hypothesis, thereby revealing its empirical implausibility all the more clearly. See

"Die Frage des Proletariats in unserer Zeit," in Leo Kofler, *Der Proletarische Bürger* (Wien: Europa Verlag, 1968).

45. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* John Cumming, trans. (New York: Continuum, 1971). On Horkheimer and Adorno's altered concept of work, see also Theodor W. Adorno, "Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis," in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 759 ff.

46. These claims are applicable, however, only for the phase of Critical Theory which is marked by the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which if we follow the sequence suggested by Helmut Dubiel emerged in the writings at the beginning of the 1940s. See Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory*, Benjamin Gregg, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985). With regard to Horkheimer's earlier conception of work, see in contrast Jóhann P. Arnason, *Von Marcuse zu Marx*, chapter 2.

47. See Thomas Baumeister and Jens Kulenkampff, "Geschichtsphilosophie und philosophische Ästhetik," *Neue Heft für Philosophie*, vol. 5, 1974, pp. 74 ff.

48. I examine this theoretical transition in more detail in my essay "From Adorno to Habermas: On the Transformation of Critical Social Theory," in this volume. See also Wellmer, "Communication and Emancipation".

49. See Stefan Breuer, *Die Krise der Revolutionstheorie*. Breuer starts with the supposition that the tendency, identified in Marx's analysis of capital, toward the 'real subsumption' of all work relations through capital has today become historical reality. As a consequence of the "impossibility of locating even one single non-reified, non-abstracted moment in the completed world of capital" (Breuer, p. 115), he supposes that every critique of capital that is still practically oriented must fail embarrassingly.

50. I mean in particular Andreas Wildt's work, *Produktivkräfte und soziale Umwälzung*. In this essay Wildt makes recommendations for a conceptual transformation of historical materialism which is supposed to make it possible to explain revolutionary social movements in terms of the historical unfolding of a potential for nonviolent, sensuous and mimetic appropriation thus intentionally no longer working within the explanatory framework of political economy. The basic motive for this proposal arises from the conviction that the thesis contending that the development of productive forces comes into contradiction with the productive relations of society cannot adequately explain processes of revolutionary social transformation. Wildt's argumentative strategy entails, first, dissolving the connections between the theory of revolution and the critique of political economy which, in the Marxist tradition, were forged through the supposition that the productive forces themselves possessed emancipatory potential. He then develops a version of historical materialism inspired primarily by Marx's early writings, and so purged of virtually all political-

economic assumptions. In this version he establishes as the explanatory principle for social transformations the conflict between powers of appropriation [*Aneignungskräften*], which have been called forth during the history of the species, and which are actualized in the structure of a given society, and relations of appropriation [*Aneignungsverhältnissen*], which are specific to each society. The category of appropriation has in one segment of the recent discussions of Marxism (e.g. J. P. Arnason and H. Lefèbvre) taken on the status of a key concept holding out the possibility of a non-instrumental, cognitive-aesthetic relation to the world. In Wildt's approach it apparently draws together in one thought all those potential actions whose nonviolent and sensuous approach to reality always already represent a moment of *praxis* critical of domination. The goal of this theoretical transformation is to make historical materialism conceptually responsive to the diversity of anti-capitalist acts of resistance which are motivated not by experiences of oppression in the arena of capitalist production, but rather by group specific experiences of the repression of sensuous life needs, of nonviolent forms of interaction and of possibilities for aesthetic expressionexperiences, that is, of social constraints placed upon the development of subjective potential [*Subjektivitätspotentialen*].

My questions concerning this proposed transformation of historical materialismwhich has thus far, to be sure, been presented only in a sketchy and programmatic mannerare directed toward two weaknesses in Wildt's arguments, both of which converge at one point. On the one hand, he ignores from the very beginning the power-theoretic level of argumentation on which Marx's determination of the conditions making social resistance possible, itself derived from his analysis of capital, has its place. Marx's suppositions concerning the revolutionary potential of the working class were, moreover, also connected with the determination of opportunities for organization and sources of strategic power which were made available to this class by the structure of capitalist society. Any corrective effort seeking to bring historical materialism into relation with the zones of resistance typical of late capitalism which completely excludes this level of Marxist argument can do so only at the price of a certain theoretical naïveté.

On the other hand, it is unclear to me how the concept of appropriation can at all assist in explaining the formation of social groups with aspiration for revolutionary transformation, since it already refers to the existence of modes of experience and forms of praxis which are non-instrumental and, therefore, in the broadest sense aesthetic-expressive. In the signification which Wildt gives to the key concept of 'appropriation', the structure of the learning process which is first able to explain the possibility of alternative forms of social life is left out of considerationthe existence of a life-praxis which enriches subjectivity can only be identified after the fact. For this reason it seems to me that the range of social phenomena which this concept can theoretically determine is too narrow. It thematizes neither the various normative implications that may enter into experimental modes of aesthetic action nor the social-structural zones of conflict in which such 'powers of appropriation' might erupt. I cannot yet see how these two problems might be resolved within the conceptual framework provisionally outlined by Andreas Wildt.

51. Richard J. Bernstein has pointed out this thematic convergence in *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), p. 185, fn. 21.

52. For a general summary see Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979), chapter 1, part 2.

53. See especially Jürgen Habermas, "Analytische Wissenschaftstheorie und Dialektik," in *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 9 ff.; and "Gegen einen positivistisch halbierten Rationalismus," *op. cit.*, pp. 39 ff.

54. See Jürgen Habermas, "Labor and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena *Philosophy of Mind*," in Jürgen Habermas *Theory and Practice*, John Viertel, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), pp. 142169; Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," in Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, Jeremy Shapiro, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 81122; and Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Jeremy Shapiro, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1.

55. See Jürgen Habermas, "Knowledge and Human Interests," Appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 301317.

56. See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

57. See Jürgen Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures," in Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Thomas McCarthy, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), pp. 95129.

58. This criticism has already been made by various authors, although none of them has proposed a thematically richer concept of work. Cf. John Keane, "On Tools and Language: Habermas on Work and Interaction," *New German Critique*, 1975, pp. 82 ff.; Ben Agger, "Work and Authority in Marcuse and Habermas," *Human Studies* 2, 1979, pp. 191 ff. The writings of Johann P. Arnason are an exception. See in particular "Marx and Habermas," in Axel Honneth and Urs Jaeggi (Eds.), *Arbeit, Handlung und Normativität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980) and his *Zwischen Natur und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1976), chap. 3.

59. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 53.

60. Arnold Gehlen, *Der Mensch. Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt*, ninth edition (Frankfurt am Main, 1971).

61. This point has been made by Dietrich Buhler in his interpretation of Gehlen's early writings, "A. Gehlen: Die Handlung," in J. Speck, ed., *Grundprobleme der grossen Philosophen. Philosophie der Gegenwart II* (Gottingen, 1973), pp. 230 ff.



62. See Habermas, Appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 301317.

63. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, pp. 131132.

64. Cf. Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures."

65. The reconstruction of such a critical conception of work would above all have to reinterpret the concept of the 'totality of work' [*Ganzheit der Arbeit*], which Georges Friedmann has developed on the model of craft work, within the framework of a developed sociological theory of action. See Georges Friedmann, *Grenzen der Arbeitsteilung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1959). On the historical place and the systematic structure of the sociology of Georges Friedmann, which established the French tradition of 'sociologie du travail', see Klaus Düll *Industriesoziologie in Frankreich* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), chapter 2, section 2. Regrettably, the French tradition in the sociology of work has remained virtually without influence in the Federal Republic. One early and, given the perspective of my own arguments, surprising exception is represented by an essay by Jürgen Habermas: "Die Dialektik der Rationalisierung (1954)," reprinted in Jürgen Habermas, *ArbeitErkenntnisFortschritt* (Amsterdam, 1970), pp. 7 ff.

66. See Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures."

67. On this see Barrington Moore's suggestive reflections in, *Injustice: The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, 1978).

68. Phillipe Bernoux, "La résistance ouvrière à la rationalisation: la réappropriation du travail," in *Sociologie du Travail* 4, 1978, pp. 397 ff.

69. On this particular feature compare Gustave-Nicolas Fischer's essay, "L'espace comme nouvelle lecture du travail," in *Sociologie du Travail* 4, 1978, pp. 397 ff.

70. Phillipe Bernoux, "La résistance ouvrière à la rationalisation: la réappropriation du travail," p. 77.

71. See also Rainer W. Hoffman, "Die Verwissenschaftlichung der Produktion und das Wissen der Arbeiter," in G. Böhme and M. V. Englehardt (Eds.), *Entfremdete Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), pp. 229 ff.

72. Bernoux, "La résistance ouvrière à la rationalisation: la réappropriation du travail," p. 80. (Thanks to Bruce Milem for translating the FrenchCW.)

73. I have also been able to gather interesting suggestions from an essay by Birgit Mahnkopf which, in turn, draws upon investigations in cultural sociology by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England. See Birget

Mahnkopf, "Geschichte und Biographie in der Arbeiterbildung," in A. Brock, H.D. Müller and O. Negt (eds.), *Arbeiterbildung* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1978).

74. See for example Robert Linhart, *Eingesspannt. Erzählungen aus dem Inneren des Motors* (Berlin/W., 1978), and Miklós Haraszti, *Stücklohn* (Berlin/W., 1975).

### Chapter 3

1. György Márkus has developed the thesis that the "crisis of culture" represents the key theme of Lukács' work in general. With regard to the early writings he has been able to demonstrate this claim brilliantly in two essays in particular: G. Márkus, "Die Seele und das Leben. Der junge Lukács und das Problem der 'Kultur'," in Agnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, György Márkus, and Sándor Radnóti, eds., *Die Seele und das Leben. Studien zum frühen Lukács* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), pp. 99130, and G. Márkus, "Lukács 'erste' Ästhetik: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Philosophie des jungen Lukács," *ibid.*, pp. 192240. An informative overview of Lukács' course of theoretical development during his youth is additionally presented by Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács From Romanticism to Bolchevism* (London, 1979), chapter 2 and by Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York, 1979), pt. 1. A brief but precise summary is also presented, finally, by Martin Jay in *Marxism and Totality* (Oxford, 1984), chap. 2.

2. Georg Lukács, Forward (1962) to *Theorie des Romans*, (Darmstadt und Neuwied, 1971), p. 13. English edition *Theory of the Novel*, Anna Bostock, trans. (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1971).

3. On this theme see also the posthumously published text by Ernst Fischer, *Ursprung und Wesen der Romantik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), pp. 245ff. Additionally, from the numerous more recent studies concerning the romantic period, see Johannes Weiss, "Wiederversauberung der Welt? Bemerkungen zur Wiederkehr der Romantik in der gegenwärtigen Kulturkritik," in *Kultur und Gesellschaft. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Sonderheft 27/1986, pp. 286ff., esp. p. 290

4. Michael Löwy has produced highly commendable studies on the internal differentiation of the romantic period and particularly concerning the tradition of "revolutionary romanticism" or "romantic anticapitalism." He distinguishes these from a "backwards-oriented romanticism," a "conservative romanticism," and finally a "sobered or disenchanted romanticism." From among Löwy's numerous writings on romantic anticapitalism I shall cite here only the essay, co-composed with Robert Sayre, "Figures du romantisme anticapitaliste," in *L'homme et la Société*, vol. 69/70 (1983), pp. 99 ff.

5. See Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pt. 1, chap. 1.



6. On this see Petra Röder, "Von der Frühromantik zum jungen Marx. Rückwärts gewandte Prophetie eines qualitativen Naturbegriffs," in Gisela Dischner and Richard Faber, eds., *Romantische Utopieutopische Romantik* (Hildesheim, 1979), pp. 149ff.
7. Concerning the romantic content in Marx's concept of work see Agnes Heller, "Habermas and Marxism," in J.B. Thompson and D. Held, eds., *HabermasCritical Debates* (London, 1982), pp. 21 ff.
8. See for example Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pt. 1, chap. 7.
9. See the insightful interpretation by Karl-Heinz Bohrer, *Die Asthetic des Schreckens* (München/Wien, 1978), pp. 43 ff., ("Kultur und Verhäßlichung der Welt").
10. The tension between these two alternative interpretations of the romantic community ideal, as Bernhard Schubert has brilliantly shown, is the actual theme of Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. See Bernhard Schubert *Der Künstler als Handwerker. Zur Literaturgeschichte einer romantischen Utopie*, (Konigstein/Ts., 1986), chap. 5, sec. 2 ("Doktor Faustus (1943/47). Der implizite Dialog mit Nietzsche, Lukács und Adorno über Idealität und Ende der altbürgerlichen Lebensform").
11. On this tradition see Jürgen Habermas, "The German Idealism of the Jewish Philosophers (1961)," in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, Frederick Lawrence, trans. (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1983), pp. 2144. Another line in this tradition of romanticism leads from Rousseau to Lévi-Strauss: see, in this volume, "A Structuralist Rousseau. On the Anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss."
12. See for example Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), especially chap. 1. The work by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the theory of perception (see, e.g., *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith, trans. [Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981] also seeks to show something similar using the concept of the "perceptual dialogue."
13. For this see G. Márkus, "Die Seele und das Leben. Der junge Lukács und das Problem der 'Kultur'," in Heller, et al. Lucien Goldmann strongly emphasized from the beginning the existential-philosophical dimension to Lukács' early work. He thus interprets Lukács *Soul and Form* as "a decisive moment in the development of modern existentialism." See L. Goldmann, "Georg Lukács L'essayiste," in *Recherches Dialectiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), pp. 247/259.
14. G. Lukács, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas* (1911), in: Georg Lukács *Werke*, vol. 15 (Darmstadt und Neuwied, 1981).

15. G. Lukács, *Soul and Form* (1911), Anna Bostock, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974).

16. See Lukács' summary in *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*, pp. 91 ff.

17. G. Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, Anna Bostock, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 6465 (translation modified).

18. Rüdiger Dannemann has convincingly shown in his dissertation that the philosophy of Hegel had in general only a very limited significance for Lukács' early work: see R. Dannemann, *Prinzip Verdinglichung. Studie zur Philosophie von Georg Lukács* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), pt. B, chap. 1.

19. Concerning this "tragic" tendency in Lukács' early writings see G. Márkus, "Die Seele und das Leben," in Heller, et al., especially pp. 107 ff., as well as G. Márkus, "Lukács 'erste' Ästhetik," in Heller, et al., p. 208 ff. In the negativistic parts of his early work, in which he assumes there to be a structural incompatibility between life and form, between human emotional life and form-giving objectification, Lukács orients himself around Georg Simmel's "Tragedy of Culture" (on this see G. Simmel, "Der Begriff und die Tragödie der Kultur," in *Das Individuelle Gesetz* [Frankfurt am Main, 1968], pp. 116 ff.). Concerning the influence of Simmel upon Lukács early work, see the summary interpretation by Rüdiger Dannemann in *Das Prinzip Verdinglichung*.

20. G. Lukács, "The Bourgeoise Way of Life and Art for Art's Sake," in *Soul and Form*, pp. 5578; see also the interpretation by Bernhard Schubert, *Der Künstler als Handwerker*, chap. 4, pp. 133 ff. For the preparatory work on Dostoyevsky see Ernst Keller, *Der junge Lukács, Antibürger und wesentliches Leben* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), chap. 4.

21. Bernhard Schubert also sought to interpret the unique character of Lukács' idea of the artistic craftperson in this fashion. See *Der Künstler als Handwerker*, pp. 137 ff.

22. On this see G. Márkus, "Lukács' 'erste' Ästhetik," esp. p. 209.

23. On the relation of Bloch and Lukács, see Sándor Radnóti, "Bloch und Lukács: Zwei radikale Kritiker in der 'gottverlassenen Welt'," in Heller, et al., *Die Seele und das Leben*, pp. 177 ff.

24. G. Lukács, "Alte und neue Kultur," in *Georg Lukács. Goethe-preis 1970* (Neuwied und Berlin, 1970), pp. 44 ff.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

27. Georg Lohmann offers a very good overview of the more recent work on Lukács, including that dealing with his early writings, in "Authentisches

und verdinglichtes Leben. Neuere Literatur zu Georg Lukács 'Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein', in *Philosophische Rundschau*, 30(1983), vol. 3/4, pp. 253 ff.

28. On this theme in general see chap. 4 of Jürgen Habermas, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, vol. 1 of *Theory of Communicative Action*, Thomas McCarthy, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

29. For the concept of 'strong evaluations', see Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?" in *Philosophical Papers 2, Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 211-230.

## Chapter 4

### Notes

1. Translated by John Farrell. I wish to thank Rolf Wiggershaus for helpful comments.
2. See, among others, Dubiel: 1984; Jay: 1973; Wiggerhaus: 1986. In addition, the following provide comprehensive surveys: Bottomore: 1984; Brandt: 1981; Gmünder: 1985; Held: 1980; Jeyer: 1982; Kilminster: 1979; Slater: 1977; Tar: 1977.
3. Institute members' accounts of their experiences at the institute exist primarily in interview form, see Habermas (1978) and Löwenthal (1980); an extract from Löwenthal is translated in Dubiel (1981). The first systematic investigations of the internal differences within the institute's circle are presented in Brandt (1981), Breuer (1985), Habermas (1986) and Jay (1982).
4. See, for example, Hörisch: 1980; see also Dews: 1984.
5. Above all I am thinking of Benhabib (1981), Habermas (1984, ch. 4, section 2), Held (1980, part 3), Honneth (1991, part 1) and Wellmer (1971).
6. See the contributions in the following collections: Bonss and Honneth: 1982; Honneth and Wellmer: forthcoming.
7. On Horkheimer's theoretical development, see Korthals: 1985; Küsters: 1980. On Horkheimer in general, see Schmidt: 1976.
8. On this, see Schivelbusch: 1982.
9. On the early history of the Institute for Social Research see, among others, Kluke (1972, esp. book 4, ch. 2) and Migdal (1981).
10. The collected edition of *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (1970) is now available as a paperback (1980). On the history of this journal, see Schmidt's immensely informative Forward to the new edition (Schmidt: 1980); see also Habermas: 1980.

11. Above all, I am thinking of the articles by Horkheimer (1972c; 1972d) and Marcuse (1968).
12. On these two fronts against metaphysics and scientism see, above all, Horkheimer (1972d), but also Horkheimer (1972a).
13. On the existential-ontological aspect of Marcuse's interpretation of Marxism, see Breuer (1977, ch. 2, sect. 2) and Schmidt (1968).
14. The best overview of the 'philosophy of history' assumptions of critical Marxism is still provided by Cerutti (1970).
15. On the historical background of this thesis, see Mahnkopf: 1985, esp. ch. 6.
16. On Pollock, see Dubiel: 1975.
17. On the 'Freudian Left', see Dahmer: 1973; on the Frankfurt School's reception of Freud, see Bonss: 1982.
18. A complete overview of Fromm's theoretical development is given by Funk (1980).
19. See, above all, Fromm: 1932; 1978. Fromm wrote the social-psychology part of the large-scale investigation, 'Authority and Family' (see Fromm: 1936); the pilot studies for this project, which Fromm undertook within the framework of an empirical investigation. 'German Works 1929', have recently been edited (Fromm: 1980). For a general background, see Bonss's Introduction to the latter work (Bonss: 1980).
20. Thus, above all, in Horkheimer (1972d, esp. p. 43); the concept of culture that Horkheimer uses here is strongly reminiscent of E. P. Thompson's in his history of the English working-class.
21. Programmatically, for instance, in Horkheimer (1972b); I have followed the re-ordering of Horkheimer's concept of culture from action-theoretic to institution-theoretic, in Honneth (1991, ch. 1).
22. See, for example, Adorno: 1978; as far as I can see, the works of Leo Löwenthal, who was responsible for the theory of literature and culture at the institute, also belong in this framework: see, above all, Löwenthal: 1932.
23. On critical theory's premisses based on the philosophy of consciousness, see Habermas: 1984, pp. 366ff.
24. On their influence on Horkheimer see, above all, Jay: 1984, ch. 6.
25. On their influence on Marcuse, see Schmidt: 1968.
26. On Walter Benjamin's influence on the early Adorno, see Buck-Morss: 1977.

27. See, above all, Habermas (1984, chap. 4, sect. 2) and Benhabib (1986, pp. 147ff.); an interesting "rescue" of Horkheimer's moral philosophy is undertaken by Schnädelbach (1986).
28. I have developed this thesis at length in Honneth (1991, part 1, pp. 1ff.).
29. I am thinking particularly of Horkheimer (1941; 1978).
30. On this, see esp. Klein and Kippenburg: 1975.
31. I have followed this transformation of the concept of labour in Honneth (1994a).
32. On this theme in general, see Müller: 1977; Schmucker: 1977.
33. On this, see Habermas: 1987, pp. 130ff.; Honneth: 1984.
34. On this movement toward a 're-philosophizing', see Adorno: 1973; Dubiel: 1984, A sect. 4.3.3; Horkheimer: 1974.
35. In the following I proceed from a distinction which Habermas introduced in his debate on critical theory (see Habermas: 1987a, p. 558), and I shall attempt to clarify this essentially loose differentiation between a 'closed' and an 'outer' circle at the institute.
36. An introductory survey is offered by Söllner (1979, pp. 86ff). On Neumann, see Söllner (1978); on Kirchheimer, see the summary in Luthardt (1976).
37. An introduction to Benjamin is offered by Witte (1985) and Wolin (1982).
38. See, for a general introduction to Fromm, Bonss: 1982.
39. See, above all, the following collections of essays: Neumann: 1978a; Kirchheimer: 1976a.
40. On the debate within the institute on the analysis of Fascism see, among others, Rainer: 1984; Wilson; 1982.
41. On the superiority of Neumann's and Kirchheimer's analysis of Fascism over the analysis offered by the theory of state capitalism, see Schäfer: 1977; Wilson: 1982.
42. See the reference in Söllner (1979, pp. 101ff.); the influence of Austro-Marxism on the socialist theory of the state and of law in the Weimar Republic has not been extensively researched. A first approach, although it does not consider Neumann and Kirchheimer, is the investigation by Strom and Walter (1984).
43. See, above all, Neumann: 1977.

44. On this see, above all, Marramao: 1982; on the further development of Neumann's 'theory of intertwinement' in the post-war period, see Buchstein and Schlöer: 1983.
45. There are few studies of Benjamin that are successful in demonstrating the unity behind his diverse thinking; of major significance is Habermas's interpretation (Habermas: 1983). See also Tiedemann: 1973.
46. See the reference in Zohlen (1980).
47. See, for example, the perspective in Adorno (1978); the 'de-aestheticization of art' is the heading under which he later considers the culture industry in Adorno (1984, pp. 52ff.).
48. On the current state of research, see the overview provided by Kellner (1982).
49. See my critique in Honneth (1991, ch. 3).
50. Benjamin continually referred to Ludwig Klages's anthropological theory and, above all, to the conception of the pictorial imagination and dream consciousness: see here Benjamin (1985a). On the entire complex see, as an introductory but incomplete analysis, Fuld (1981).
51. On his approaches to a history of forms of communication see, for example, Benjamin (1973a). Benjamin's interest in class-specific forms of experience and perception are evident in his book reviews: see, for example, Benjamin (1972; 1985b).
52. See the contemporizing reference in Wellmer (1985, esp. pp. 41ff).
53. See, for example, Fromm (1971, pp. 193ff).
54. See, above all, Fromm (1941, ch. 2).
55. See Adorno (1972b) and Marcuse (1966), especially the Epilogue, 'The Social Implications of Freudian "Revisionism"', in the latter work. See also Jacoby (1978), which is written from Adorno's and Marcuse's perspective.
56. On these differences, see Bonss: 1982, pp. 397ff.
57. For a critique of the social-theoretical premisses of Adorno's interpretation of psychoanalysis see, above all, Jessica Benjamin (1977); I have attempted to continue this critique in Honneth (1991, part I, chap. 3).
58. See Institut für Sozialforschung (1955); in the fifties a concentration on industrial sociology was already emerging (see Institut für Sozialforschung: 1956; Pollock: 1957). In the seventies this concentration on projects within industrial sociology in connection with Alfred Sohn-Rethel's theory became almost total; see Brandt (1981) and, in general, Institut für Sozialforschung (1981).

59. For Horkheimer, see the essays in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (1985, vols. 7 and 8); for Adorno, see above all the studies and essays in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (1972a, vol. 8); for Marcuse see, among other of his works, Marcuse (1972).

60. Immensely informative on Horkheimer's late work is Schmid Noerr (1985); see also habermas: 1986b, esp. pp. 172ff.).

61. On this, see Baumeister and Kulenkampff: 1973; on Adorno's later sociological work, see Honneth: 1991, ch. 3.

62. On critical theory's communications-theoretic development a term which encompasses Habermas's new approach see Brunkhorst (1983), Honneth (1994b) and Wellmer (1977); on Habermas's theory in its entirety, see McCarthy (1984).

63. See the other essays in Habermas (1979a), and also Habermas (1979c).

64. A brilliant presentation of the development which leads to the basic assumptions of this book is given by Bernstein (1985); see also my own presentation (Honneth: 1991, ch. 9).

65. On the introduction of the concept of system, see Habermas: 1987a, chap. VI, section 2.

66. See McCarthy (1985); see also the contributions by Joas, Berger and Arnason in the collection of essays edited by Honneth and Joas (1990), as well as Honneth (1991, ch. 9). Habermas has in the mean time already replied to these critiques (Habermas: 1990, esp. pp. 377ff.).

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## Chapter 5

1. I wrote this essay in 1976 with the aim of exploring the argumentative change that had taken place in critical theory as a result of the transition from Adorno to Habermas a change which in the situation at that time was not immediately clear. It was first published in English translation considerably abbreviated in *Telos* (Nr. 39, 1979, pp. 4561). A more informally written German version was subsequently published in *Merkur* (vol. 374, 1979, pp. 648665). The original German essay was first published in its entirety in a collection of essays entitled *Sozialforschung als Kritik: Zum sozialwissenschaftlich Potential der Kritischen Theorie*, edited by Wolfgang Bonß and Axel Honneth (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982). This version was only slightly revised with the addition of a few notes and comments and with the elimination of a few remarks that had in the course of time become inaccurate.

This third publication occurred at a time when, with the publication of his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas had not only given a bold formula-

tion of his own program for a critical theory of society, but also had at the same time demarcated his project from that of the Frankfurt tradition of theory. In this inquiry Habermas sought not only for the first time to define his own theoretical relation to Adorno, but at the same time completed yet a further change in his position relative to him. Through expanding his conception of rationality by the dimension of expressive action, Habermas's social theory entered into the domain of aesthetics, which had until then been Adorno's exclusive preserve. Unfortunately, I was not in this essay able to address this more recent shift in the relation of Habermas to Adorno. Thus, to a certain extent, it has been able only to make initial preparations for the discussions which are now being carried out on the basis of Habermas's developed works.

This essay was retranslated in its entirety by Charles Wright for the occasion of its publication in this volume.

2. C. Grossner, *Verfall der Philosophie* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1971), p. 15.

3. The following works are among the first to have attempted to explore the theoretical turn introduced by Habermas in the history of the tradition of critical social theory: Albrecht Wellmer, *Critical Theory of Society*, John Cumming, trans. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971); Wellmer, "Communication and Emancipation: Reflections on the 'Linguistic Turn' in Critical Social Theory," in *On Critical Theory*, John O'Neill (ed.) (New York: University Press of America, 1989), pp. 231-263.; Trent Shroyer, *The Critique of Domination* (New York: George Braziller, 1973); M. Theunissen, *Gesellschaft und Geschichte. Zur Kritik der kritischen Theorie*, (Berlin, 1969); David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory. Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

4. See Jürgen Habermas, "Theodor Adorno: The Primal History of Subjectivity Self Affirmation Gone Wild (1969)," in Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, Frederick Lawrence, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), pp. 99-110; Habermas, "Ein philosophierender Intellektueller," in *Philosophisch-Politische Profile* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971); Habermas, "Herbert Marcuse: Einleitung zu einer Antifestshrift" in *Philosophisch-Politische Profile*; Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," in Jürgen Habermas *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics*, Jeremy J. Shapiro, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 81-122; and Habermas, "Walter Benjamin: Consciousness-Raising or Rescuing Critique (1972)," in Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, pp. 129-164.

5. See Max Horkheimer, *Kritische Theorie. Eine Dokumentation*, Alfred Schmidt (ed.), (Frankfurt am Main, 1968).

6. For a similar point, see Wellmer, *Critical Theory of Society*, chap. 2, pp. 67-120.

7. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, John Cumming, trans. (New York: Continuum, 1987), 'The Importance of the Body,' pp. 231-236.



8. On this see F. Grenz, *Adornos Philosophie in Grundbegriffen. Auflösung einiger Deutungsprobleme* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), p.160 ff.

9. *Ibid.*, chapters 5 and 6.

10. Adorno develops this central theme systematically in his *Aesthetic Theory*. Above all, see Th. Baumeister and J. Kulenkampff, "Geschichtsphilosophie und philosophische Ästhetik", *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, vol. 5 (1974), pp. 74104. See also H. Paetzold, *Neomarxistische Ästhetik*, vol. II (Düsseldorf, 1974), pp. 7101.

11. "Of course thought has always sufficed concretely to characterize its own equivocation," in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 37. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* seeks to offer proof for this statement. See also F. Grenz, *Adornos Philosophie in Grundbegriffen*, chap. 4.

12. This thesis is presented by Baumeister and Kulenkampff in "Geschichtsphilosophie und philosophische Ästhetik".

13. Regarding the 'Hegelian' versions of critical Marxism, see F. Cerutti, "Hegel, Lukàcs, Korsch. Zum dialektischen Selbstverständnis des kritischen Marxismus," in Oskar Negt (ed.), *Aktualität und Folgen der Philosophie Hegels* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 195210.

14. On the reception of Adorno's critique of foundational philosophy, see Jürgen Habermas, "Literaturbericht zur philosophischen Diskussion um Marx und den Marxismus (1957)," in Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 387463, here p. 435; on the concept of dialectic in the context of Habermas's interpretation of Adorno, see Habermas, "Primal History of Subjectivity" in *Philosophical Political Profiles*, pp. 104107.

15. Habermas, 'Literaturbericht zur philosophischen Diskussion um Marx und den Marxismus,' p. 436.

16. "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed. The summary judgment that it had merely interpreted the world, that resignation in the face of reality had crippled it in itself, becomes a defeatism of reason after the attempt to change the world miscarried," Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, E. B. Ashton, trans. (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 3.; on this see also Pt. 3.

17. Theodor Adorno, "Drei Studien zu Hegel," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5 (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), p. 247 ff.; see also Michael Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist als theologisch-politischer Traktat* (Berlin, 1970), p. 24 ff.

18. Jürgen Habermas, "Labor and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena *Philosophy of Mind*," in *Theory and Practice*, pp. 142169; on the differences in the interpretations of Hegel by Horkheimer and Adorno and by Habermas see F. W. Schmidt, "Hegel in der Kritischen Theorie der 'Frankfurter Schule'," in Oskar Negt (ed.), *Aktualität und Folgen der Philosophie Hegels*, pp. 1757.

19. "It is not merely that domination is paid for by the alienation of men from the objects dominated: with the objectification of spirit, the very relations of men even those of the individual to himself were bewitched," Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 28.

20. On the theory of the concept, see Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 151 ff.; concerning the alternative synthesis of aesthetics see the thoughtful interpretation by H. Paetzold, *Neomarxistische Ästhetik*, vol. II.

21. See Albrecht Wellmer, *Critical Theory of Society*, chap. 3, pp. 121-139.

22. This epistemological theme is contained only in scattered remarks in Adorno's writings: see, for example, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 146 f. and 176 f. One also encounters in these places some of his few references to Alfred Sohn-Rethal, who had early on already developed an epistemological theory out of the structural comparison of commodity exchange and forms of bourgeois thought (see, for example, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology*, Martin Sohn-Rethal, trans. [Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978]). See also Adorno's "Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, p. 76. Concerning this theme in general see the inquiry by R. W. Müller, *Geld und Geist. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Identitätsbewusstsein und Rationalität seit der Antike* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), vol. II.

23. *Ibid.*, Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 189 ff; see also the inquiry by Josef F. Schmuckers, *AdornoLogik des Zerfalls*, which is especially worthwhile from the perspective of this particular problem constellation.

24. The meaning of this historical experience for the course of theoretical development within the Institute for Social Research has been examined by Helmut Dubiel in *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory*, Benjamin Gregg, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), pt. 1.

25. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 40 (translation modified); see also Baumeister and Kulenkampff, "Geschichts-philosophie und philosophische Ästhetik", p. 83 ff.

26. First against Ernst Bloch in an essay on Schelling (J. Habermas, "Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang zum Materialismus: Geschichts-philosophische Folgerungen aus Schellings Idee einer Contraction Gottes," in *Theorie und Praxis*, pp. 172-227) and in his detailed critique of Bloch (J. Habermas, "Ernst Bloch: A Marxist Schelling," in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, pp. 61-78); then against Adorno (J. Habermas, "The Primal history of Subjectivity," in *Philosophical-Political Profiles* pp. 99-110); and finally against Marcuse (J. Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," in *Toward a Rational Society*, pp. 81-122). On the theme of "reconciliation with nature" in the tradition of critical social theory, see first the important distinctions made by M. Theunissen, *Gesellschaft und Geschichte*, p. 21 ff. as well as R. Maurer, "Natur als Problem der Geschichte," in R. Maurer, *Revolution und 'Kehre'* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), p. 126 ff.

27. On the growing philosophical significance of the concept of action, see Richard J. Bernstein's comprehensive work, *Praxis and Action* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971).
28. Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," p. 85 ff.
29. On this unresolved ambivalence in Adorno's philosophy of history see Josef Schmucker, *AdornoLogik des Zerfalls*, in particular p. 51 ff.
30. Habermas, "Primal History of Subjectivity," p. 108.
31. A similar observation is made by Baumeister and Kulenkampff in "Geschichtsphilosophie und philosophische Ästhetik," p. 99 ff.
32. On the 'monism' of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, see Wellmer, "Communication and Emancipation."
33. Habermas developed his ideas on a theory of human-specific forms of action in his lectures on anthropology (see Habermas, *Problems of a philosophical Anthropology*, unpublished manuscript 1966/1967), and later in his theory of socio-cultural universals, developed on the basis of these lectures (see Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Thomas McCarthy, trans. [Boston: Beacon Press, 1975], p. 8 ff). Habermas developed complimentary reflections concerning a theory of action-specific forms of experience in his epistemological inquiries (explicitly first in "Knowledge and Human Interests," originally published as "Erkenntnis und Interesse" in *Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969], pp. 146/168, and first published in English as an appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Jeremy Shapiro, trans. [Boston: Beacon Press, 1971], pp. 301/317). Both lines of thought contribute to Habermas's conception of history.
34. Passage from Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, E. F. N. Jephcott, trans. (London: NLB, 1974) pp. 177/178. See also in relation to this the Dedication, pp. 15/18.
35. Jürgen Habermas, "Knowledge and Human Interests", Appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 314/315.
36. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 15.
37. Theodor Adorno, "Der Essay als Form", in Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur, Gesammelte Schriften* 11 (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), p. 27.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
39. On this see Theodor Adorno, "Anmerkungen zum philosophischen Denken", in Adorno, *Stichworte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), pp. 11/19.
40. On this see Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), chap. 3 as well as Richard J. Bernstein, *The*

*Restructuring of Social and Political Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), Pt. 4.

41. On this see Dieter Henrich, "Kritik der Verständigungsverhältnisse. Laudatio für Jürgen Habermas", in Jürgen Habermas and Dieter Henrich, *Zwei Reden* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), particularly p. 12 ff.

42. See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, chap. 2, sec. 6. For a more focussed discussion of the concept of the 'community of research' [*Forschergemeinschaft*], see Gerd Wartenburg, *Logischer Sozialismus. Die Transformation der Kantschen Transzendentalphilosophie durch Charles S. Peirce* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971).

43. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 140.

44. Theodor Adorno, "Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen," in Theodor Adorno, "Philosophische Frühschriften," *Gesammelte Schriften I* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 366371, here p. 368.

45. See F. Grenz, *Adornos Philosophie in Grundbegriffen*, p. 211 ff.

46. J. Habermas, "Walter Benjamin: Consciousness-Raising or Rescuing Critique (1972)," in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, p. 142.

47. See Manfred Riedel, "Hegel und Marx. Die Neubestimmung des Verhältnisses von Theorie und Praxis," in Manfred Riedel, *System und Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 939. Rüdiger Bubner's study, *Theorie und Praxis eine nachhegelsche Abstraktion* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), is in its very treatment of the textual material too precipitous in criticizing Marx. Concerning Marx's utilization of Hegel's dialectic of Lordship and Bondage, see instead the work from Thomas Meyer, *Der Zweispalt in der Marxschen Emanzipationstheorie* (Kronbert/Ts., 1973), p. 167 ff. See further Axel Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action," in this volume. Johann P. Arnason develops an ambitious conception of a "dialectic of work" in *Zwischen Natur und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt-Köln, 1976), chap. 3.

48. Theodor Adorno and Ursula Jaerisch, "Anmerkungen zum sozialen Konflikt heute," in Theodor Adorno, *Soziologische Schriften I, Gesammelte Schriften*, 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 177195, here p. 184.

49. On this see Theodor Adorno, "Resume über Kulturindustrie," in Theodor Adorno, *Ohne Leitbild* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 6070.

50. See Theodor Adorno, "Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie," in *Soziologische Schriften I, Gesammelte Schriften*, 8, pp. 373391, especially p. 383 ff.

51. Both the empirical and the philosophical-historical difficulties can be kept separate in Adorno's arguments. Concerning the empirical uncertainty see for example his essays "Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie" and "Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft" (in *Soziologische Schriften I*, pp. 354370). On the

philosophical-historical uncertainty see "Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis" in Theodor Adorno, *Stichworte*, pp. 169192, particularly pp. 169 and 172: "Praxis was the reflect of necessity; it continues to disfigure wherever it seeks to eliminate scarcity [*das entstellt sie noch, wo sie die Lebensnot abschaffen will*]."

52. Adorno, "Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis," p. 179.

53. Jürgen Habermas, "Marxism as Critique" in *Theory und Practice*, John Viertel, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 196.

54. Habermas, "Marxism as Critique," in *Theory und Practice*, pp. 196197.

55. On both dimensions of the relation between theory and practice see Habermas's essay "Introduction: Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis" in *Theory und Practice*, pp. 140.

56. See Habermas, "The Classical Doctrine of Politics in Relation to Social Philosophy," in *Theory und Practice*, pp. 4181, as well as "Praktische Folgen des wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritts," in *Theorie und Praxis*, pp. 336358.

57. See "The Classical Doctrine of Politics in Relation to Social Philosophy," in *Theory und Practice*, especially p. 41. This distinction also forms the basis of the inquiry "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," in *Toward a Rational Society*.

58. See "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'," above all pp. 100120.

59. On this see in particular "Introduction: Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Practice," *Theory und Practice*, pp. 2832.

60. See O. Negt and A. Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung. Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972).

61. See Oscar Negt, "Revolution und Geschichte. Eine Kontroverse mit Jürgen Habermas", in O. Negt, *Politik als Protest* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), pp. 87101. This strategic unclarity in his political writings can also be attributed, of course, to the circumstance that in the course of his theoretical development Habermas has increasingly formalized the normative implications of his conception of the public sphere in the form of an ethics of communication. He has thereby at the same time been forced, however, to give up the empirical social and historical descriptive richness of his earlier concept. On this see O. Kallscheuer, "Auf der Suche nach einer politischen Theorie bei Jürgen Habermas," in *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 45/46, 1981, p. 171 ff.; as well as J. Cohen, "Why More Political Theory," *Telos* 40, Summer 1979, pp. 7094.

62. On this see the thoughtsinformed by the social-historical studies of E. P. Thompsonof M. Vesters, "Solidisierung als historischer Lernprozess," in D. Kerbs (ed.), *Die hedonistische Linke* (Neuwied/Berlin, 1970), pp. 143198.

63. See "Introduction: Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Practice," in *Theory and Practice*.
64. This runs counter to critics who reproach Habermas's theory either with having retracted altogether the practical intent of critical theory (see, for example, J. Miller's review of *Legitimation Crisis* in *Telos* 25, 1975, pp. 210220) or with having dissolved political practice in 'group therapy' (see, for example, G. E. Rusconi, "Erkenntnis und Interesse bei Habermas," in W. Dallmayr [ed.], *Materialien zu Habermas Erkenntnis und Interesse* [Frankfurt am Main, 1974], pp. 107134).
65. Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeoisie Society* translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
66. Habermas, "Walter Benjamin: Consciousness Raising or Rescuing Critique (1972)," p. 142.
67. See W. Kuhlmann, *Reflexion und kommunikative Erfahrung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), p. 13 ff.; concerning Adorno, by contrast, see R. Klein and H. G. Kippenberg, "Zu einer Theorie von Geschichtserfahrung," *Saeculum* XXVI, 1975, pp. 128148.
68. Concerning problems with Habermas's conception of nature, see Joel Whitebook, "The Problem of Nature in Habermas," *Telos* 40, 1979, pp. 4169. On problems with Habermas's conception of work see, among others, Johann P. Arnason, "Marx und Habermas," in A. Honneth and U. Jaeggi (eds.), *Arbeit, Handlung, Normativität: Theorien des Historischen Materialismus 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp. 137184, as well as A. Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action."

## Chapter 6

1. Cf. v. Descombes, *The Self and the Other* (Cambridge), ch. 3; E. Kurz Weil, *The Age of Structuralism*, New York 1980.
2. "La oensee du dehors", *Critique* 195/196, 1962.
3. Cf. Foucault, "Le language de l'espace," *Critique* 203, 1964.
4. Cf. A. Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Theory of Society*, Kenneth Baynes, trans., (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), ch. 4.
5. Cf. H. L. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago 1982), ch. 1, 4.
6. A. Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, ch. 5.



7. *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. W. A. Sheridan, trans., (London: 1979), p. 222.
8. Cf. Th. Adorno, *Notes zur Literatur. Gesammelte Schriften 11*, Frankfurt 1974.
9. The relation between the power theory of Foucault and the sociology of domination in Weber has not been investigated in detail. See however B. Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique* (London: 1983), ch. 6.
10. *Discipline and Punish*, p. 222.
11. M. Horkheimer, Th. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, John Cumming, trans., (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1972), p. 231.
12. *Discipline and Punish*, ch. 4.
13. On the place of Kant in Foucault's *The Order of Things*, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Frederick G. Lawrence, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), ch. 9.
14. J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ch. 5.
15. Cf. the convincing objections of A. Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 1 (London: 1981), p. 171 ff.
16. For Adorno's psychoanalytically informed theory of the weakness of the ego in contemporary society see "Die revidierte Psychoanalyse" and "Zum Verhältnisse von Soziologie und Psychologie" in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* 8 (Frankfurt: 1972), pp. 20 ff, and 42 ff.
17. Here I follow Albrecht Wellmer's distinction between various forms of critique of the subject in *The Persistence of Modernity, Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism* trans., David Midgley (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991). See also Peter Dews, "Power and Subjectivity in Foucault," *New Left Review* 144 (1984), p. 72 ff.
18. Cf. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 189.
19. Th. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, E. B. Ashton, trans. (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 281.
20. For the influence of Nietzsche see Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ch. 5; for the affinity with Klages see A. Honneth "L'esprit et son objet" in G. Raulet (ed.), *Weimar on l'explosion de la modernité* (Paris 1984), p. 97 ff.
21. Cf. Manfred Frank, Lectures 9 and 10. *What is Neostructuralism?* Sabine Wilke and Richard Gray, trans., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
22. On the problematic of the concept of the body in Foucault's theory see H. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, p. 110 ff.

23. For a critique of Adorno's philosophy of history see A. Honneth *Critique of Power*, ch. 2.

## Chapter 7

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, John and Doreen Weightman, trans. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1977).
2. See Jean Piaget, *Insights and Illusions of Philosophy*, 1st Am. Ed., Wolfe Mays, trans. (New York: World Publishing Co., 1971).
3. *Tristes Tropiques*, p. 52.
4. *Tristes Tropiques*, p. 52.
5. *Tristes Tropiques*, p. 390.
6. See Hanns Henning Ritter, "Claude Lévi-Strauss als Leser Rousseaus," in Wolf Lepenies and Hanns Henning Ritter, eds., *Orte des Wilden Denkens* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 113. With regard to the relation of Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau's philosophy, Hinrich Fink-Eitel's highly instructive essay, "Nihilismus und Solidarität. Claude Lévi-Strauss' philosophische Begründung des Strukturalismus" (MS 1979) has been helpful for me, although he draws conclusions in opposition to mine.
7. *Tristes Tropiques*, p. 392.
8. *Tristes Tropiques*, p. 392.
9. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man," in *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 2, Monique Layton, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 41.
10. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Scope of Anthropology," in *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 2, p. 30.
11. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer, trans., Rodney Needham, trans. and ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).
12. See for example Edmund Leach, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, revised edition (New York: Viking Press, 1974).
13. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Joseph Ward Swain, trans. (New York: Free Press, 1965); see in particular book I, chap. 7.
14. Henning Ritter, "Die ethnologische Wende. Über Marcel Mauss," *Neue Rundschau* 3 (1981).
15. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "French Sociology," in G. Gurvitch and W. E. Moore, eds., *Twentieth Century Sociology* (New York, 1945).



16. Lévi-Strauss, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man," p. 38.
17. See Howard Gardner, *The Quest for Mind. Piaget, Lévi-Strauss and the Structuralist Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
18. Cf. the conversation between Lévi-Strauss and Didier Eribon in *The View from Afar*, Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1985).
19. See the first group of essays under the heading of "Language and Kinship" in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*.
20. See the summary by Simon Clarke, *The Foundations of Structuralism. A Critique of Lévi-Strauss and the Structuralist Movement* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1981).
21. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Place of Social Anthropology in the Social Sciences and the Problems Raised in Teaching It," in *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 1, pp. 346381 as well as "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in Anthropology," in the same volume, pp. 3154.
22. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, Rodney Needham, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).
23. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
24. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
25. Lévi-Strauss, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man," p. 38.
26. See Johann P. Arnason, *Zwischen Natur und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: EVA, 1976), in particular p. 66.
27. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 38.
28. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Reflections on Liberty," in *The View from Afar*.
29. See the discussion with Paul Ricoeur in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979); additionally see Alain Caillé, "D'un éthnocentrisme paradoxal," in *MAUSS* 16 (1985).
30. See Clifford Geertz, "The Cerebral Savage," in *Encounter* 4 (1967).

## Chapter 8

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, Claude Lefort, ed., John O'Neill, trans. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973);

Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Primacy of Perception*, James Edie, ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964); Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Claude Lefort, ed., Alphonso Lingus, trans. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

2. Alexandre Métraux and Bernhard Waldenfels, eds., *Leibhaftige Vernunft. Spuren von Merleau-Pontys Denken* (München, 1986).

3. See for example Peter Kiwitz, *Lebenswelt und Lebenskunst. Perspektiven einer kritischen Theorie des sozialen Lebens* (München, 1986).

4. See the imposing study by Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie in Frankreich* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), chap. 1. Bernhard Waldenfels may be said in general to have been principally responsible for the introduction of Merleau-Ponty's thought to the German-speaking public.

5. Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, Alden L. Fisher, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963); and *Phenomenology of Perception*, Colin Smith, trans. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981).

6. Charles Taylor, "Leibliches Handeln," in A. Métraux and B. Waldenfels, eds., *Leibhaftige Vernunft*, pp. 194 ff.

7. See Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) and *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), as well as Hubert L. Dreyfus, *What Computers Can't Do: The Limits of Artificial Intelligence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

8. Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures at the College of France: 1952/1960*, John O'Neill, trans. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

9. German edition: Merleau-Ponty, *Das Auge und der Geist*, (Hamburg, 1967); English edition, *Signs*, Richard C. McCleary, trans. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

10. Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie in Frankreich*, chap. 3.

11. M. Richir, "Der Sinn der Phänomenologie in 'Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare'," in Métraux and Waldenfels, eds., *Leibhaftige Vernunft*, pp. 86 ff.

12. G. B. Madison, "Merleau-Ponty und die Postmodernität," in Métraux and Waldenfels, eds., *Leibhaftige Vernunft*, pp. 162 ff.

## Chapter 9

1. On this see Axel Honneth, "Saving the Revolution with an Ontology: On Cornelius Castoriadis's Social Theory," in this volume.

2. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: a Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, Hazel E. Barnes, trans. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pt. 3, chap. 1.
3. On this complex argumentative relation see Ludwig Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie* (Freiburg/München, 1979) and Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung* (Stuttgart, 1982), above all chap. 3.
4. Arthur C. Danto offers a reconstruction of this argument very much worth reading in *Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Viking Press, 1975).
5. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 340-400.
6. See Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere. Studien zur Sozial-ontologie der Gegenwart*, (Berlin/New York, 1977), chap. 6.
7. See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 358; concerning this complex see also Peter Kampits, *Sartre und die Frage nach dem Anderen* (Wien, 1975), pp. 223 ff.
8. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 347 ff.
9. See also Charles Taylor's critique, "What is Human Agency?," in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers 1, Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 1544.
10. See Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung*, pp. 343 ff.
11. Michael Theunissen, "Sartre ein Dialektiker," in *Dialektik: Beiträge zu Philosophie und Wissenschaften*, 2 (1981), p. 19.
12. For this see Axel Honneth, "Ohnmächtige Selbstbehauptung. Sartres Weg zu einer intersubjektivistischen Freiheitslehre," in *Babylon. Beiträge zur jüdischen Gegenwart*, 2 (1987), pp. 82-88.
13. *Sartre by Himself*, a film directed by Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat (Chicago: Citadel Films, Ltd.).

## Chapter 10

1. C. Castoriadis, *Sozialismus oder Barbarei*, (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1980), p. 39.
2. Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Kathleen Blauney, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 75.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 127128.
6. Cf. Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1976).
7. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, pp. 137 and 139.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 140141.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
11. C. Castoriadis, "Le Decouverte de l'Imagination," in *Libre*, vol. 3, 1978, pp. 151 ff.
12. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 221.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. Cornelius Castoriadis, "Modern Science and Philosophical Interrogation," in *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*, Kate Soper and Martin H. Ryle, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), pp. 145228.
16. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 228.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 231 and 331.
19. Cornelius Castoriadis, "Psychoanalysis: Project and Elucidation," in *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*, pp. 46118.
20. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, pp. 297298, p. 331.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
22. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Frederick G. Lawrence, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 327335.

## Chapter 11

### Notes

1. I would like to thank Martin Schmeiser for helpful suggestions in writing this paper. This paper is a translation of "Die zerrissene Welt der symbolischen Formen", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 36, 1984.
2. In contrast, Bourdieu's sociological work has had considerable resonance in West German educational science as well as, recently, in historical research. On the standing of Bourdieu's sociology in France see Pollak (1978).

The first introduction to Bourdieu's work has now been published by Alain Accordo (1983).

3. In the introduction to *Le Sens pratique*, Bourdieu (1980, preface, p. 7 ff.) has himself described in the form of a retrospective analysis of his theoretical development his gradual turning away from Lévi-Strauss' structuralism.
4. On the methodology of the survey and accompanying investigations see Bourdieu (1979, appendix 1).
5. To an extent the concept of "distinction" used by Bourdieu resembles the categories of *Unterschiedsbedürfnis* or the *Abhebungstendenz* which Georg Simmel (1983, p. 26 ff.) uses to describe comparable phenomena in his "sociology of fashion".
6. Jon Elster (1981) also notes a theoretical discrepancy of this sort in his excellent review of *Distinction*.
7. Phillippe Adair (1983) also develops an illuminating critique of Bourdieu's utilitarian principles.

### References

Accordo, Alain (1983), *Initiation a la sociologie de l'Illusionisme social*, Bourdeaux: Editions le Mascaret.

Adair, Philippe (1983), "Sociologie du discours et statut de l'economique," *MAUSS. Bulletin du Movement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales*, 8.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Passeron, J. C. (1964), *Les heritiers, les etudiants et la culture*, Paris: Minuit; *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture*, Chicago University Press (1979).

Bourdieu, Pierre, Boltanski, L., Castel, R. and Chamboredon, J. C. (1965), *Un art moyen, essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*, Paris: Minuit.

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## Chapter 12

\*This is a slightly altered version of a paper presented at the Inter-University Center in Dubrovnik in April, 1981; a German version appears in *Leviathan*, Jg. 9 (1981), H. 3/4. I have benefited from conversations with Birgit Mahnkopf; Hans Joas provided stimulating and useful criticism.

1. Cf. Seyla Benhabib, "Procedural and Discursive Norms and Rationality," Ms. 1980; Herbert Kitschelt, "Moralisches Argumentieren und Sozialtheorie," im *Archiv f. Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie*, Bd. LXVI/3 (1980), p. 391 ff.

2. I have borrowed this concept which indicates desymbolized forms of morality from Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2 vols., Günther Roth and Claus Wittichs (eds.), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), vol. II, p. 929.

3. Cf. especially Barrington Moore, *Injustice. The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt* (London, 1979); George Rudé, *Ideology and Popular Protest* (New York, 1980).

4. George Rudé, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

5. Cf. Rainer Döbert, "Was mir am wenigsten weht tut, dafür entscheid ich mich dann auch." "Normen, Einsichten und Handeln," in *Kursbuch* 60, 1980, p. 43 ff.
6. Michael Mann, "The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 35, no. 3 (p. 423 ff), p. 435.
7. Pierre Bourdieu, "Kulturelle Reproduktion und soziale Reproduktion," in P. Bourdieu and J. C. Passeron, *Grundlagen einer Theorie der symbolischen Gewalt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), p. 88 ff.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Cf. the literature quoted in the essay of Michael Mann; also Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order* (London, 1971), chap. 3 ("Class Inequality and Meaning System").
10. Barrington Moore has developed a similar thought under the title "The Expropriation of Moral Outrage"; however, he limits this largely to the culture industry. B. Moore, *Injustice, op. cit.*, chap. 14, p. 7.
11. Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 7.
12. Cf. the examples given by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, in O. Negt und A. Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972).
13. Cf., for example, Ulrich Rödel und Tim Guldemann, "Sozialpolitik als soziale Kontrolle," *Starnberger Studien* 2 (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), p. 11 ff; Lothar Hack und Irmgard Hack, "Bewirtschaftung der Zukunftsperspektive," *Gesellschaft, Beiträge zur Marxschen Theorie* 12 (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), p. 101 ff.
14. Vgl. etwa Wulf Tessin, "Stadtumbau und Umsetzung," *Leviathan*, 6 (1978), p. 501 ff.
15. Cf. David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980), chap. 13.
16. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Jeremy Shapiro, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), Claus Offe, "Politische Herrschaft und Klassenstrukturen," G. Kress und D. Serghaas (Hrsg.), *Politikwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), p. 155 ff.
17. Michael Mann uses the concept of "pragmatic acceptance" in the essay cited.
18. Opposed to this is the "disparity theory" proposed especially by Claus Offe. Cf. Claus Offe, "Politische Herrschaft und Klassenstrukturen," *op. cit.* However, there seems to me to be good empirical evidence for a much closer connection between social class and cultural life-chances than that maintained by "disparity theory." For the Federal Republic of Germany, cf. the presentation



by Karl Ulrich Mayer, which is oriented toward categories suggested by Anthony Giddens; "Ungleiche Chancen und Klassenbildung," *Soziale Welt*, Jg. XXVIII (1977), p. 466 ff.

19. Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (London, 1973), chap. 7.

20. Jóhann P. Arnason, "Marx und Habermas," Axel Honneth und Urs. Jaeggi (eds.), *Arbeit. Handlung. Normativität. Theorien des Historischen Materialismus II* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980), p. 137 ff.

21. Cf. the uncommonly stimulating study by Josef Moser, "Abschied von der 'Proletariat'. Sozialstruktur und Lage der Arbeiterschaft in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in historischer Perspektive," to appear in W. Conze und M. R. Lepsius (eds.), *Sozialgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Stuttgart, in press).

22. (New York, 1973); cf. to the whole complex also William J. Goode, *The Celebration of Heroes: Prestige as a Control System* (Berkeley, 1978), chap. 6.

23. Cf. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York and London, 1974).

24. Vgl. Rainer-W. Hoffman, "Die Verwissenschaftlichung der Produktion und das Wissen der Arbeiter," G. Böhme und M. v. Engelhardt (eds.), *Entfremdete Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), p. 229 ff.

## Chapter 13

### Notes

1. Here I deviate from Gerd Irrlitz's interpretation; he distinguishes between an affirmative and a critical concept of the "postmodern" (Irrlitz: 1990). I think all concepts of the "postmodern" have at least one affirmative feature in common, viz. to see in the process of the "dissolution of the social" the chance for an expansion of aesthetic freedoms for individuals.

2. A similar approach for grasping the socio-cultural situation in highly developed societies is proposed by Heinrich Popitz, who distinguishes between five "recognition needs" which appear in an historical sequence (Popitz: 1987).

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## Chapter 14

I would like to thank the following for their fruitful comments and objections: Rainer Forst, Lutz Wingert as well as the members of the Philosophy Working group at the Berlin Institute for Advanced Studies (Dagfinn Foellesdal, Hasso Hofmann, Onora O'Neill, Ulrich K. Preuss and Elaine Scarry).

1. Cf. for an exemplary model: Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986) and my own discussion of it, "Soziologie: Eine Kolumne" in *Merkur* 470 (1988), p. 315ff.
2. Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) is still a text of central importance in this regard.
3. In addition to the authors discussed here, Richard Rorty and Michael Walzer are, for respectively different reasons, judged to belong to the philosophical wing of this movement. A communitarian position is upheld in sociology above all in the major study by Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton (*Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1985)). For a brilliant overview of the inner link between sociological and philosophical critiques of liberalism, see Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism," *Political Theory* 18, 1 (1990), p. 6ff.

4. Cf. the summary of Otfried Höffe, "Kritische Einführung in Rawls Theorie der Gerechtigkeit" in O. Höffe (ed.), *Über John Rawls Theorie der Gerechtigkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), p. 11f.

5. Michael Sandel, "Introduction" in Sandel (ed.), *Liberalism and Its Critics* (New York, 1984), p. 5.

6. See Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 50 for a definition.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

8. Cf. for example, *ibid.*, p. 21.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

10. Sandel, "Introduction," p. 5.

11. On this distinction between the "normative" and "ontological" levels of argumentation with reference to the critique of liberalism cf. the clarifying essay by Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate" in Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 159ff.

12. Similar objections have been forthcoming to Sandel's critique of Rawls from various camps. Amy Gutmann has thus attempted to show in her discussion of the "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism" (*Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (1985), p. 308ff) that Sandel must of necessity misunderstand the underlying normative orientation of liberalism for the simple reason that he does not take its historical point of reference into account. As soon as we have to assume that people in principle champion different notions of the good that is, following the decay of traditional world-views justice or the idea of equal rights must be regarded to be the central "virtue" of the political order, for freedom to realize one's own goals in life becomes the property to which the greatest value is attached. If, however, this is based on historically relative premises, and this runs contrary to Rawls's original intention, then the methodological limits to Sandel's anthropological objection soon become apparent. For even the expanded "communitarian" notion of the individual does not exclude that "we may accept the politics of rights not because justice is prior to the good, but because our search for the good requires society to protect our right to certain basic freedoms and welfare goods" (*ibid.*, p. 311, footnote 14).

13. Sandel, "Introduction," p. 6.

14. In *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (1985), p. 223ff.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

17. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" in his *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969), p. 118f.

18. Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 213.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

20. On this concept of personality, which Taylor develops following Harry Frankfurt's famous conception of "second order desires," see my "Postscript" in Charles Taylor, *Negative Freiheit: Zur Kritik des neuzeitlichen Individualismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 295ff.

21. "What is Human Agency?", in *Human Agency and Language*, vol. I, of *Philosophical Papers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 15-44.

22. Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, p. 229.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

24. It is this linking of individual self-realization and reference to social community that Charles Larmore would appear to ignore completely in his defence of liberalism against the challenge of Romantic "expressivism." By attempting to disprove the idea of social community by means of the classical distinction between "private" and "public" spheres he imputes to human subjects that they are able to find and realize their personal goals without needing any backing or solidarity from a culture of commonly shared convictions. In the light of this "foreshortened" concept of self-realization, the sharp criticism which Larmore levels at the political-theoretical claims made by the Hegelian concept of ethical life would appear to be somewhat presumptuous. Hegel can, like Durkheim at a later point, be understood as attempting to justify the necessity of communalization that goes beyond that of modern legal relations by suggesting that subjects are only able to realize their particular identities in the framework of an overarching value community. cf. for example, Raymond Plant, "Community: Concept, Conception and Ideology," *Politics and Society* 8, 1 (1978), pp. 79ff. To my mind, Stephen Holmes, like Charles Larmore, neglects the degree to which individual self-realization depends on a community when defending "modus vivendi" liberalism bluntly against communitarianism; see his "The Permanent Structure of Antiliberal Thought" in Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 227f.

25. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chap. 15.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

30. See *ibid.*, p. 208.

31. Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, p. 309.

32. Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique . . .", in particular p. 16ff.

33. Cf. as an exemplary model, Jürgen Habermas's chapter on discourse ethics in his *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. C. Lenhardt and S. Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

## Chapter 15

\* Inaugural lecture held at the Department of Philosophy, University of Frankfurt, June 28, 1990.

1. Ernst Bloch, *Naturrecht und menschliche Würde* (Frankfurt:Suhrkamp, 1961), p. 234.

2. In my *habilitationsschrift* I undertook a detailed reconstruction of this concept: Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung, Zur moralisheun Grammatik suzialer Konflskte*, Frankfort am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992.

3. For examples see Aron Gurewitsch, *Zur Geschichte des Achtungsbegriffs und zur Theorie der sittlichen Gefühle*, Inaugural Dissertation (Würzburg, 1897); Rudolph von Ihering, *Der Zweck im Recht*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1905), pp. 388 ff. A modern study from the perspective of linguistics is put forward by Stephen L. Darwall, "Two Kinds of Repsect," in *Ethics*, 88, no. 1, pp. 36 ff.

4. For an excellent study of loss of reality as a result of torture see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain. The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford, 1985), chap. 1. A survey of the literature is be found in Günter Frankenberg, "Politisches Asylein Menschenrecht?," in *Kritische Justiz*.

5. On the connection between rights and self-respect see Joel Feinberg, "The Nature and Value of Rights," in his *Rights, Justice and the Bounds of Liberty, Essays in Social Philosophy* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 143 ff. A more differentiated version has since been provided by Andreas Wildt, *Recht und Selbstachtung*, MS, 1990.

6. Among the exhaustive literature on the subject, the clearest exposition of this phenomenon is in my opinion: Wilhelm Korff, *Ehre, Prestige, Gewissen* (Cologne, 1966). Of interest from the sociological perspective are Peter Berger, "On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor," in *European Journal of Sociology*, 11 (1970), p. 339; and Hans Speier, "Honor and Social Structure," in *Social Order and the Risks of War, Papers in Political Sociology* (New York, 1952), pp. 36 ff.

7. Among the studies pointing to the category of "psychological death" are those of Bruno Bettelheim, as in *Surviving, And Other Essays* (Thames & Hudson, London, 1979), especially part I. On the category of "social death" see, among others, Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: 1982); and Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie der Sklaverei* (Frankfurt, 1989), part I, chap. 5.

8. For a systematic analysis of "self-confidence" as the result of experiences of attachment in early childhood, see Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (Norton, London, 1980). For a study in terms of a theory of recognition drawing on Hegelian concepts but utilizing advanced psychoanalytical tools, see Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love, Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (New York, 1988), especially chap. 1.

9. On this point see G. H. Mead, *Geist, Identität und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 1973), pp. 236 ff; a reconstruction from the perspective of "self-respect" is undertaken by Ernst Tugendhat, *Selbstbewußsein und Selbstbestimmung* (Frankfurt, 1979), Lecture 12, pp. 282 ff.

10. On this point see Mead, pp. 244 ff. My own reconstruction focuses on this issue: Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), especially pp. 183 ff.

11. See Bloch, p. 309.

12. For an examination of this point with reference to the theories of Max Horkheimer see Herbert Schnädelbach, "Max Horkheimer und die Moralphilosophie des deutschen Idealismus," in Norbert Altwicker and Alfred Schmidt (eds.), *Max Horkheimer heute: Werk und Wirkung* (Frankfurt, 1986), pp. 52 ff.

13. See John Dewey, "The Theory of Emotion I," in *Psychological Review* (1894), p. 533 ff.; and "The Theory of Emotion II," in *Psychological Review* (1895), pp. 13 ff. See for a useful discussion of Dewey's theory of emotion Eduard Baumgarten, *Die geistigen Grundlagen des amerikanischen Gemeinwesens*, vol. II, *Der Pragmatismus: R. W. Emerson, W. James, J. Dewey*, (Frankfurt am M, 1938), pp. 274 ff.

14. See, as examples demonstrating this argument: Gerhart Piers and Milton B. Singer, *Shame and Guilt. A Psychoanalytic and a Cultural Study*, (New York, 1971), especially pp. 23 ff.; Helen M. Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York, 1958), chapter 2; Georg Simmel was aiming at a similar definition in his "Zur Psychologie der Scham" (1901), published in his *Schriften zur Soziologie*, eds. H. J. Dahme and O. Rammstedt (Frankfurt am M, 1983), pp. 140 ff.

## Chapter 16

1. In the introductory part of the following reflections I rely on a distinction which I have taken, with great profit, from Albrecht Wellmer; see his "The Dialectic of Modernism and Postmodernism: The Critique of Reason since

Adorno," in *The Persistence of Modernity, Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism*, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 3694; a similar distinction between two directions in the modern critique of the subject can be found in Paul Ricoeur, "The Question of the Subject: The Challenge of Semiology," trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, in Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations. Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 236266.

2. On the critique of this kind of reaction, see the above-cited essay by Wellmer.

3. Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut can in my view be considered as an example of this kind of response; see 6886, *Itinéraire de l'individu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

4. Thomas E. Hill, "The Importance of Autonomy," in *Autonomy and Self-respect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 4351.

5. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Cornelius Castoriadis now contributes to such a theory of the person, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Kathleen Blamey, trans., Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987, on this, see Joel Whitebook, "Intersubjectivity and the Monadic Core of the Psyche: Habermas and Castoriadis on the Unconscious," in *Praxis International* 9.4 (1990): 347364; for a formulation of such a concept of the subject which relies on Mead's and Dewey's pragmatism, see now Hans Joas, *Die Kreativität des menschlichen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

6. On what follows, see also Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), chap. 4 and chap. 5, among others.

7. On such a revised ideal of autonomy in respect of the individual relation to inner nature, see Castoriadis, op. cit., esp. pp. 172181; *idem.*, "The State of the Subject Today," in *Thesis Eleven*, 24 (1989): 543; Joel Whitebook, "The Autonomous Individual and the Decentered Self," MS, 1990.

8. Donald W. Winnicott, "The Capacity to be Alone," in *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), pp. 2936.

9. See Wellmer, op. cit.

10. On this, in my view, too conventional understanding, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), chap. 15.

11. Charles Taylor, "The Concept of a Person," in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 97114.

12. Winnicott, "Psychoanalysis and the Sense of Guilt," in *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, pp. 1528.

13. See Klaus Günther, *The Sense of Appropriateness: Application Discourses in Morality and Law*, trans. J. Farrell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

14. This is the direction taken by Diana Meyers, "The Socialized Individual and Individual Autonomy," in *Woman and Moral Theory*, eds. Eva Feder Kittay and Diana Meyers (Savage: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), pp. 139153; Kenneth Baynes, *The Normative Grounds of Social Criticism: Kant, Rawls, and Habermas* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chap. 4.



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